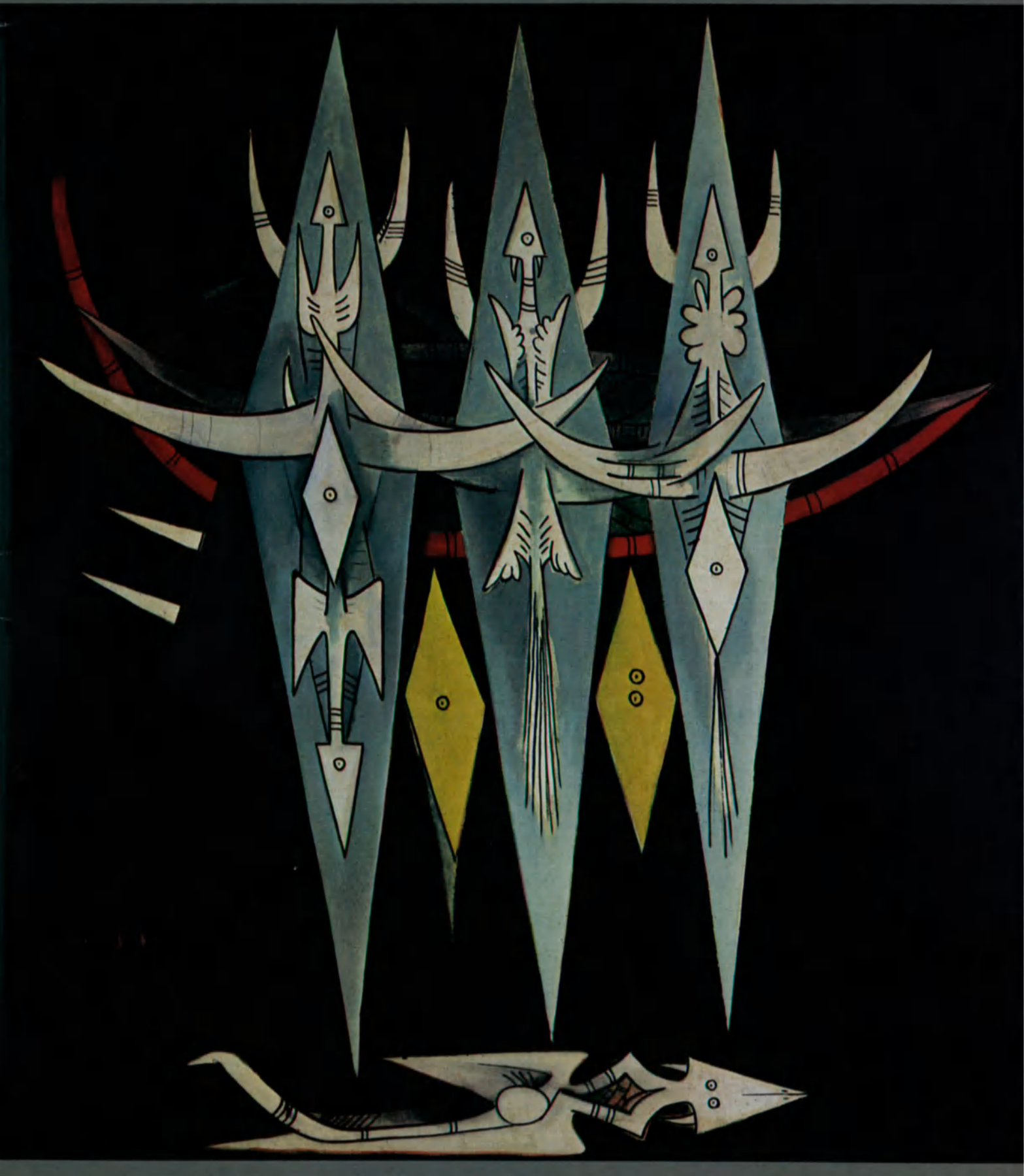
The Unesco Courier

DECEMBER 1981 - 4.50 French francs



Caribbean encounter

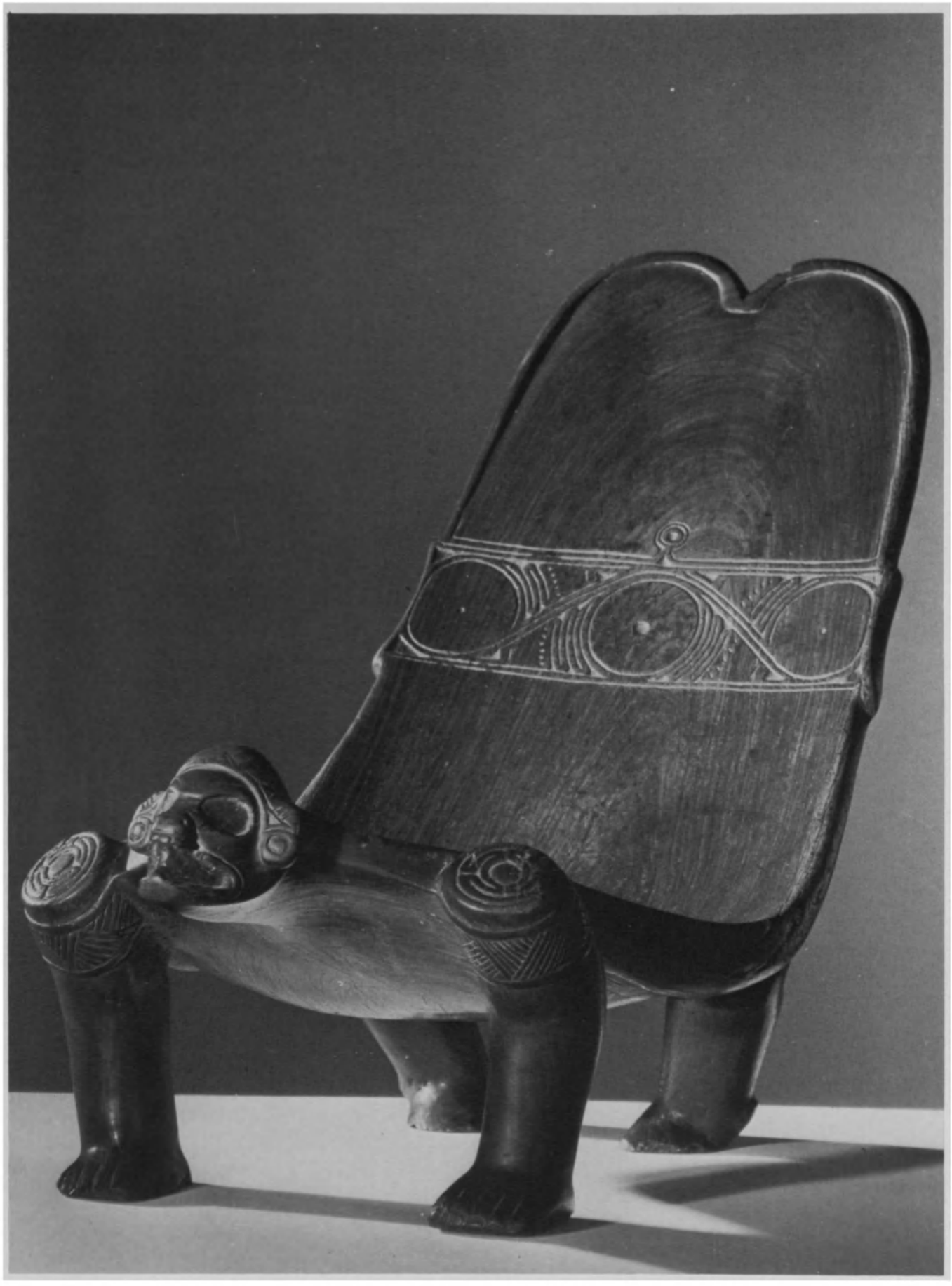


Photo José Oster © Musée de l'Homme, Paris

TREASURES OF WORLD ART

168

Haiti

Seat of honour

Carved in the form of a fearsome beast from the trunk of a guaiac tree, this *duho,* or ceremonial chair, is a fine example of the wood-carving skills of the Taino Indians, one of the indigenous peoples who inhabited the Caribbean before the arrival of the Europeans. When Christopher Columbus landed in Santo Domingo in 1492, the Indians who greeted him invited him to sit on a *duho*, an honour reserved for people of high rank. This rare specimen, now in the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, is thought to be one of the many *duho* that Columbus brought back with him to Europe.

The Unesco Courier

A window open on the world

DECEMBRER 1981 34th YEAR

PUBLISHED IN 25 LANGUAGES

English	Italian	Turkish	Macedonian
French	Hindi	Urdu	Serbo-Croat
Spanish	Tamil	Catalan	Slovene
Russian	Hebrew	Malaysian	Chinese
German	Persian	Korean	
Arabic	Dutch	Swahili	
Japanese	Portuguese	Croato-Serb	

A selection in Braille is published quarterly in English, French and Spanish

Published monthly by UNESCO
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Editorial, Sales and Distribution Offices
Unesco, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris

Subscription rates
1 year : 44 French Francs
2 years: 75 FF
Binder for a year's issues: 32 FF

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The Unesco Courier is produced in microform (microfilm and/or microfiche) by: (1) University Microfilms (Xerox). Ann Arbor, Michigan 48100, U.S.A.; (2) N.C.R. Microcard Edition, Indian Head, Inc., 111 West 40th Street, New York, U.S.A.; (3) Bell and Howell Co., Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, Ohio 44691, U.S.A.

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All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief in Paris.

ISSN 0041 - 5278
No. 11 - 1981 - OPI - 81 - 1 - 382 A

page

4 **CARIBBEAN ENCOUNTER**
A journey through the history, peoples and places of the Antilles
by Alejo Carpentier

10 **SLAVERY AND SUGAR... THE BITTER AFTERTASTE**
by Manuel Moreno Fraginals

14 **TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE HAITI'S TRAGIC HERO**
by René Depestre

14 **THE PROPHETIC VISION OF SIMON BOLIVAR**
by Manuel Maldonado-Denis

16 **CRUCIBLE OF CHANGE**
by René Depestre

29 **'OURS'**
The West Indies from within
by Marion Patrick Jones

31 **«CALENDRIER LAGUNAIRE»**
by Aimé Césaire

31 **FERNANDO ORTIZ**
'The father of Caribbean studies'
by Lisandro Otero

32 **CREATIVE CONTRADICTIONS**
The Caribbean genius has given birth to a new civilization
by Edouard Glissant

38 **CALIBAN'S REVENGE**
by Roberto Fernandez Retamar

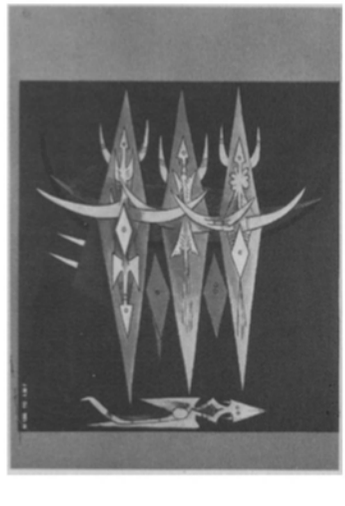
40 **UNESCO AND THE CARIBBEAN**

41 **JOSÉ MARTÍ :**
'Citizen of the Americas'

42 **MARCUS GARVEY AND THE AFRICAN DREAM**
by Kenneth Ramchand

43 **REGGAE: A JAMAICAN MUSICAL PHENOMENON**
by Sebastian Clarke

2 **TREASURES OF WORLD ART**
HAÏTI : Seat of honour



Cover

The arrival of Christopher Columbus and the Spaniards in 1492 marked the start of an intermingling of cultures in the Caribbean which continued amid the tragic events of colonialism and the slave trade. Out of this process involving Europeans, Indians, and above all black African peoples came a unique historical amalgam, rich in diversity yet united by certain underlying patterns of living and thinking. The cultural fusion of the Caribbean, one of the most original and fruitful episodes in history, is the theme of this issue of the *Unesco Courier*. For reasons of space the present number deals only with the Caribbean archipelago, and not those parts of the American continent which form part of the history and geography of the Caribbean. Cover shows *Umbral* (1949-1950), a canvas by the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam.

Photo © Luc Joubert. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

Caribbean encounter

A journey through the history, peoples and places of the Antilles

by Alejo Carpentier

Photo Goursat © Rapho, Paris

THE Caribbean has played a unique and privileged role in the history of the American continent. Here in the Caribbean was the reality of the new horizons, new forms of vegetation and new lands first described by Christopher Columbus in his log-book. Indeed, it was through that log-book and the letters Columbus wrote to the Catholic Monarchs narrating his successive voyages that the idea of America was instilled in people's minds, giving them, for the first time, a complete picture of the world in which they lived. They learnt that their planet was round and they could set about exploring it in full knowledge of where they were going. For the first time in history they knew in what world they were living.

So important and so far-reaching in its consequences was this event that it could be said to have been the most significant historical event ever, forming a watershed in the history of the world dividing humanity into two categories: those who lived before the discovery of America, and those who came after.

America, then, had been discovered, when suddenly, through a combination of circumstances, these lands, and especially those of the Caribbean, became the setting of the first symbiosis, the first recorded meeting between three races which, as such, had never met before: the whites of Europe, the hitherto unknown Indians of America, and the Africans who, although familiar to Europeans, were completely unknown on the other side of the Atlantic. It was a monumental symbiosis of extraordinary significance in its scope and the potential cultural contributions it offered, a symbiosis that was to give rise to a completely original civilization.

Yet hardly had the discovery been made and no sooner had the New World, as it came to be called, begun to be known than a negative factor emerged which was sub-

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ALEJO CARPENTIER *of Cuba, who died last year, ranks among the most distinguished novelists in the Spanish language. His books have been translated into many languages and include, in English editions,* The Kingdom of this World *(1957),* The Lost Steps *(1957), published by Knopf, New York,* Explosion in a Cathedral *(Gollancz, London, 1963) and* Reasons of State *(Partridge, London, 1976). A musicologist, he also wrote* A History of Cuban Music *and many articles and essays on Latin American literature and music. The text published here has been adapted from a talk broadcast on Cuban TV during the third Caribbean Festival of Arts ("Carifesta"), held in Cuba in 1979.*

Photo © Jean-Loup Charmet. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

The curving arc of the Caribbean islands, as shown in a map published in Amsterdam in 1662.

THE CARIBBEAN ARCHIPELAGO	POPULATION		POPULATION
ANTIGUA	74,000	JAMAICA	2,133,000
BAHAMAS	225,000	MARTINIQUE	325,000
BARBADOS	265,000	MONTSERRAT	13,000
BERMUDA	58,000	NETHERLANDS ANTILLES	246,000
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS	12,000	PUERTO RICO	3,317,000
CAYMAN ISLANDS	12,000	ST. KITTS-NEVIS AND ANGUILLA	67,000
CUBA	9,728,000	ST. LUCIA	113,000
DOMINICA	81,000	ST. VINCENT AND GRENADINES	96,000
DOMINICAN REP.	5,124,000	TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	1,133,000
GRENADA	97,000	TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS	6,000
GUADELOUPE	330,000	U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS	104,000
HAITI	4,833,000		

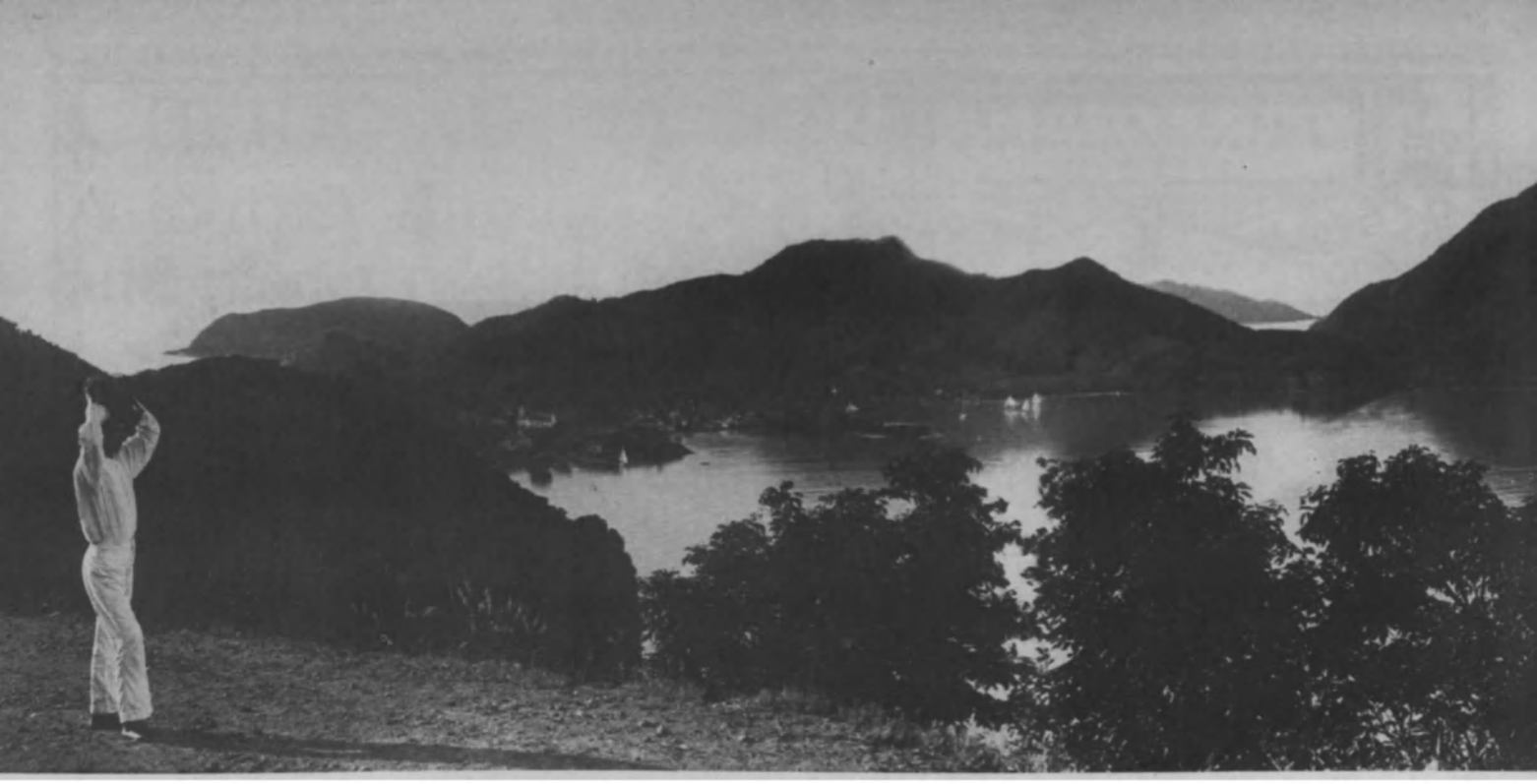
sequently to be offset by a more positive development.

To start with the negative factor. The idea of colonialism was born with the discovery of America. Before the Spanish came to America, the Portuguese, those extraordinary navigators, had reached the limits of Asia, had explored what they called the "the spice islands" and, with some English and French rivals, had voyaged on as far as India and sailed down the coasts of Africa. But they never thought of establishing colonies in the strict sense of the term. They set up trading posts, went in search of merchandise and offered merchandise in exchange. They negotiated and bartered and, although there may have been places where ten, twelve or fifteen families settled, they were the families of traders with no thought in their heads of colonization.

The Spaniards, on the other hand, went to America with colonization in mind. The first great colonizer to land in America after the discovery was the eldest son of Columbus, Diego, who arrived with his wife Maria Toledo, the niece of the Duke of Alba. He founded a small Renaissance-style court at Santo Domingo where universities and theatres were soon established and through the streets of which once strolled Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo, who was to become the first chronicler of the West Indies.

The concept of colonization already seemed firmly established. But history has its surprises and people had not reckoned with an unforeseen factor—the African slaves. Transported from the continent of Africa, the negroes, who arrived in America in fetters and chains, crammed into the bowels of pest-ridden vessels, were to be sold like merchandise and to be subjected to the most degrading conditions to which it is possible to reduce human beings. Yet with them they brought the germ of the idea of independence. With the passage of time it was to be these pariahs, these outcasts of the human race, who were to give us no less a gift than the concept of independence.

Were we to have a map on which a small red bulb lit up to indicate every uprising of negro slaves on the American continent, we should see that, from the sixteenth century onwards, a bulb has always been flickering



Panoramic view of the Iles des Saintes, above, is a composite of three photos taken one balmy day in 1899. "What marvels!" Christopher Columbus had exclaimed when he made landfall in the Caribbean four centuries before. Sketch-map (right) was drawn by the great navigator in 1493. It shows the north-western coast of Española ("the Spanish island", now Haiti and the Dominican Republic). The north is indicated by a cross.

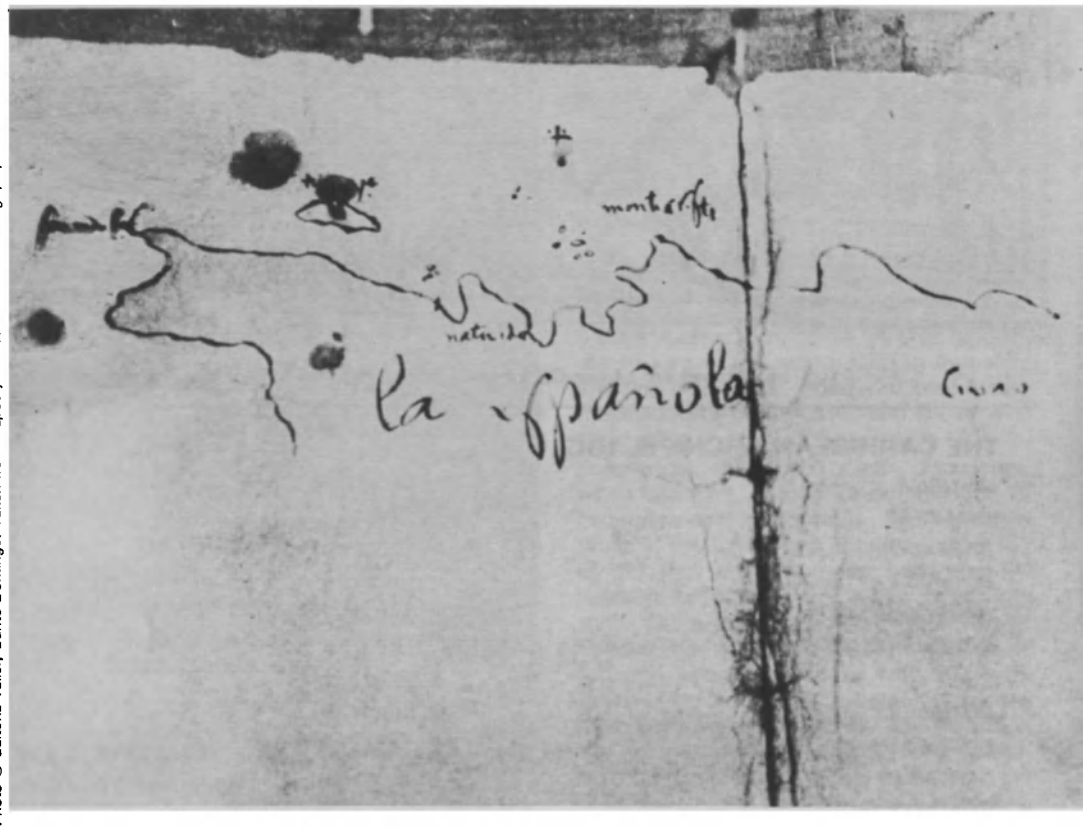


Photo © Editoria Taller, Santo Domingo. Taken from *Mapas y Planos de Santo Domingo*, by E. Demorizi

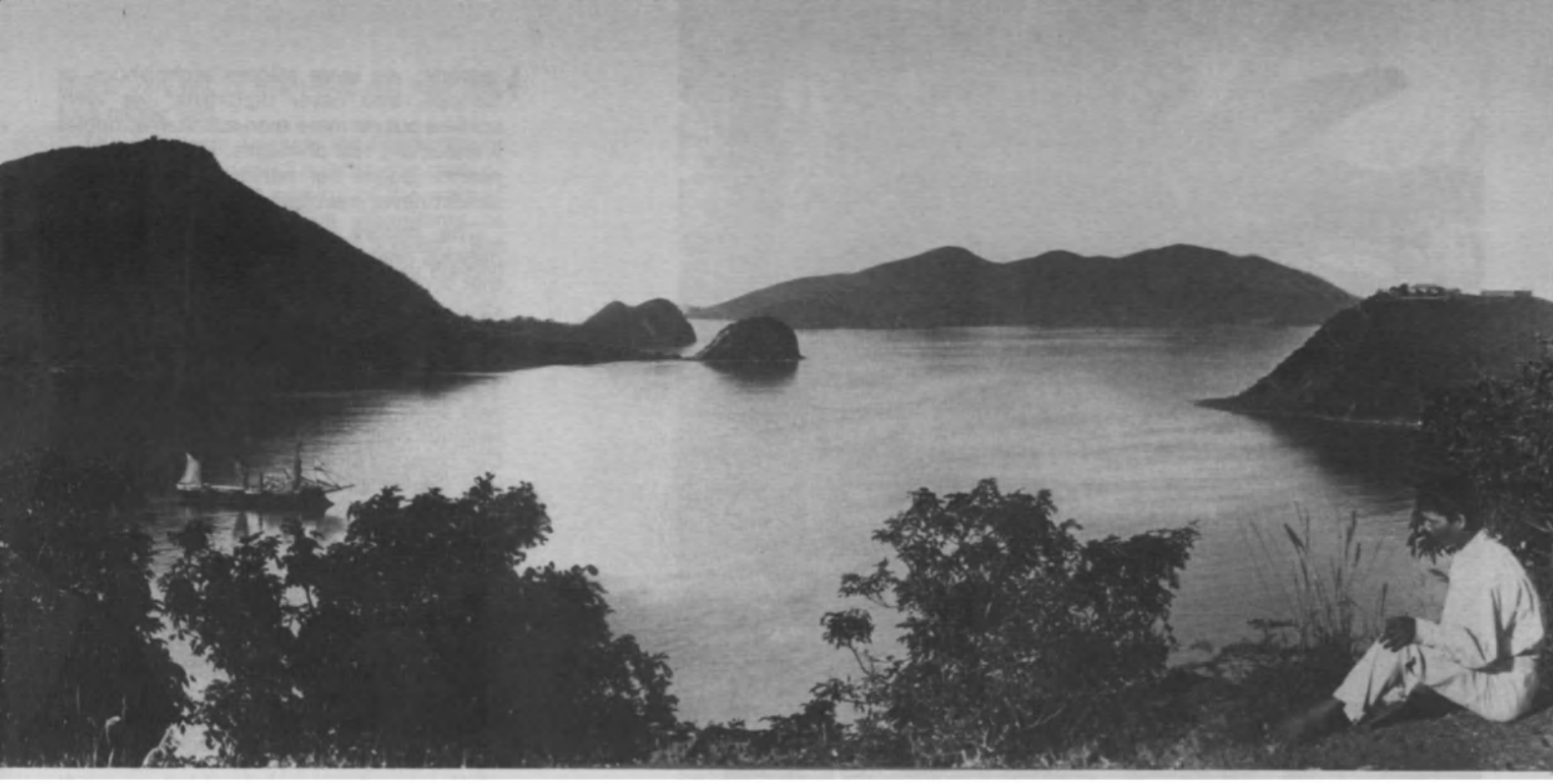
somewhere. The first great uprising took place in the sixteenth century in the mines of Buria in Venezuela, led by the negro Miguel, who succeeded in creating an independent kingdom with a court and even a dissident church with its own bishop.

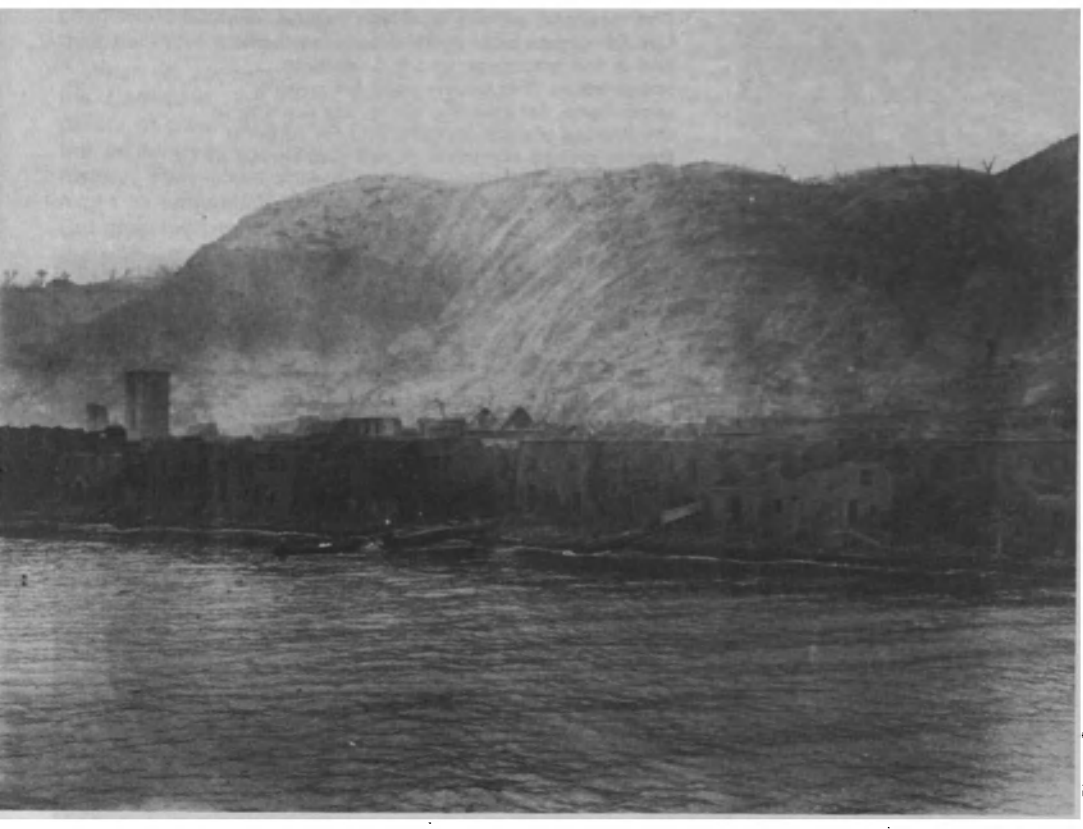
Very shortly afterwards, the uprising of the *Cañada de los Negros* occurred in Mexico and so frightened the colonial powers that the Viceroy, Martin Enriquez, felt compelled to mete out such terrible punishments as castration, with no consideration of mercy or justice, on any negro who fled into the mountains. Shortly afterwards there was an uprising in the stockade of Palmares, where the runaway slaves of Brazil created an independent kingdom that resisted the numerous expeditions which the Portuguese colonists sent against it and maintained its independence for more than sixty years.

In Surinam, at the end of the seventeenth century, there was a rebellion led by three black leaders: Sant Sam, Boston and Arabi, who succeeded in holding out against four Dutch expeditions sent to quell them. There was the rebellion of the "tailors" in Bahia, and that in Cuba led by Aponte. But special mention must be made of the Oath of Bois Caiman on account of its far-reaching historical importance.

In a place known as Bois Caiman, or the Forest of the Alligators, contingents of slaves from the French colony of Saint Domingue, now Haiti, met on a stormy night and swore to proclaim the independence of their country, an oath that was to be fulfilled and made reality by the great leader Toussaint Louverture (see page 14). The true concept of independence was born with the Oath of Bois Caiman. To the concept of colonization which the Spanish had brought to Hispaniola was opposed, in the same country, the concept of decolonization. This was the beginning of the wars of independence and of the anti-colonial wars that were to continue right up to the present day.

When we study the celebrated mid-eighteenth century *Encyclopédie* of Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau and d'Alembert, men whose ideas had such an influence on the leaders of our wars of independence, we find that the concept of independence in that great work was still purely philosophical and was concerned with the independence of man before God





Cruel facts contradict any attempt to portray the Antilles as an idyllic paradise, for the history of the Caribbean has been punctuated by volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and cyclones. One of the world's most terrible natural disasters occurred at two minutes past eight on the morning of 8 May 1902, when Martinique's highest volcanic mountain, Mont Pelée, suddenly erupted. In less than a minute the town of Saint-Pierre and all its population (some 28,000) had perished in the holocaust (left). Cyclones, which in Caribbean mythology are hurricanes fed by the wrath of Hu-Ra-Khan the wind-god, have also brought great suffering to the peoples of the Antilles. Thirteen of them were recorded in the 17th century, 33 in the 18th, 28 in the 19th, and in this century their number is higher still. The havoc wreaked by some particularly devastating cyclone has left a gaping wound in the collective memory of every Caribbean island.

Photos © Société de Géographie, Paris

and the monarchy. It speaks of freedom of the will and of man's individual freedom, but it does not speak of political independence. By contrast, what the Negroes of Haiti were demanding—and in that respect they were the precursors of all our wars of independence—was political independence and total emancipation.

Many people may object that the Oath of Bois Caiman was only taken in 1791, whereas the United States had achieved independence years before. Nobody would deny this. It should not be forgotten, however, that when the thirteen North American colonies were freed from the tutelage of the King of England and became an independent nation no longer subject to the British throne, there was no change in the pattern of life in those colonies. The landowners were the same and the great property-owners and merchants continued to live as they had before. It did not occur to anybody that the slaves might be emancipated. Before that stage was reached, they had to wait for the American Civil War. In other words, it was business as usual in the United States after the Declaration of Independence.

This was not the case in Latin America, however, since, after the revolts in Haiti, which were followed shortly afterwards by the wars of independence, culminating in the final victory at the battle of Ayacucho in 1824, the structure of the social order and social life changed completely with the emergence of the creole, a figure who already existed but had not been considered of any political account.

Who was the creole? The word creole first appeared in old American documents from the 1570's or thereabouts. Broadly speaking the creoles were people born on the new continent of America, either of mixed Spanish-Indian or Spanish-Negro blood, or else were Indians or Negroes born in America but living alongside the colonizers.

The creoles, however, felt that they were overlooked and neglected. In his *Letter from Jamaica*, one of the most important documents we possess concerning the history of America, Simón Bolívar the Liberator spoke in these words of the status of the creoles, including the more affluent among them, in the times prior to the wars of independence which he was instrumental in promoting: "We were never Viceroys or Governors save for very exceptional

reasons; we were seldom archbishops or bishops, and never diplomats; we were soldiers but no more than subalterns; nobles without any real privileges. Lastly, we were neither judges nor bankers, and we were almost never merchants".

The history of America as a whole displays one very important feature, namely that it only developed in terms of the class struggle. We have had no dynastic wars over succession to the throne, as in the case of Europe; there have been no internecine wars like the Hundred Years' War (which was a feudal struggle); we have had no religious wars in the strict sense of the term. Our constant struggle over several centuries was first of all between the conquistadors and the subjugated and oppressed indigenous class. This was followed by the struggle of the colonizers against the conquistadors.

The colonizers, who arrived later, set out to create an oligarchy and impose their authority, and succeeded in destroying the conquistador class, almost all of whose members ended up in poverty or destitution or were murdered or dispossessed of their

Photo A.-P. Nevrat © Rapho, Paris

The machete, or long Antillean cutlass, is a familiar object both in the workaday world and in the landscape of the Caribbean imagination. It is widely used for cutting sugar-cane, for clearing paths, for pruning in the banana plantation (left) and for topping freshly-picked coconuts. It has also served as a weapon in liberation struggles and is wielded symbolically in certain dances (below).

Photo © Roger Viollet, Paris

lands. Very few of them lived out their lives to a happy end.

The colonizers, become the aristocracy or oligarchy, then turned against the creoles. Eventually, with the coming of the wars of independence, the native inhabitants of America rose up against the Spanish. But the conquering creoles in their turn created a new oligarchy against which the slaves, the underprivileged and the growing middle class had to fight. This class included almost all the intelligentsia—intellectuals, writers, professors and teachers, in short, that admirable middle class that was to continue growing throughout the nineteenth century right up to the start of the present century.

In this phase of the struggle, which was to continue until the middle of this century, and is still going on, the sense of nationhood of the American countries had begun to affirm itself. In other words, after prevailing all over the continent, the creoles began to seek their own special identity and, at a later stage, with the growing independence movements in the Antilles, there arose an awareness of being Jamaican, Martiniquais or Curaçaoan, in short of being nationals of the separate islands forming the vast Caribbean world and of having characteristics of their own and being conscious of them.

When we contemplate the entire span of the Caribbean, we stand amazed at the gallery of great men it has offered us over the centuries—men who have forged our history. They show that there exists what might be termed a "Caribbean humanism". Our great men never confined their action or thinking, or the example they set, to their own orbit but projected themselves on to the neighbouring peoples. There was both an exchange of people and an interpenetration of ideas. There has always been amongst us a strong urge for mutual understanding in the context of our common aspirations.

Admiral Brion, who was from Curaçao, supported Bolívar in the independence struggles of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. Petion, the President of Haiti asked Bolívar to abolish slavery in Venezuela in exchange for his moral and material support in the war. Máximo Gómez, who won independence for Cuba, was a Dominican. The parents of the Maceo brothers, who fought in the Cuban independence struggles, had taken part in the war of independence of Venezuela. And a Cuban, Francisco Javier Yanes, signed Venezuela's act of independence. The great José Marti, the apostle of Cuba's independence, whose eventful political and historical career took place against the backdrop of the entire Caribbean, bequeathed us many moving pages, imbued with a sense of truth and profound love, on Venezuela, Guatemala, Mexico, and the countries of the Caribbean in general.

Through this exchange of people and community of ideas, the mainland areas of Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia, which were peopled by African slaves in the same colonizing process, as were Peru, Guayaquil and Brazil, ultimately came to form part of the Caribbean conglomeration which we are now beginning to perceive and understand in its entirety, as we compare what unites us and what makes each of us unique, our similarities and our differences, the birthright of the individual and the common heritage of us all.

■ **Alejo Carpentier**

Photo Michel Claude, Unesco

Perched almost a thousand metres above the Caribbean on a rugged headland in northern Haiti, the citadel of Laferrière, above, was built as a bastion to defend the newly independent country against possible invasion by returning colonialist forces. General Henri Christophe, one of the leaders of the victorious national uprising, initiated the construction of the imposing fortress in the early 19th century. Twenty thousand men are said to have worked for nine years on the project, depicted in naive painting below. This symbol of the liberation of Haiti, already seriously damaged by an earthquake in 1842, is today threatened by adverse climatic conditions, humidity and encroaching tropical vegetation. At the request of the Government of Haiti, the Director-General of Unesco, Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, launched an appeal on 10 March 1980 for the safeguard of the cultural heritage of Haiti, calling on the international community to express "the brotherhood of men through the dialogue of their cultures".

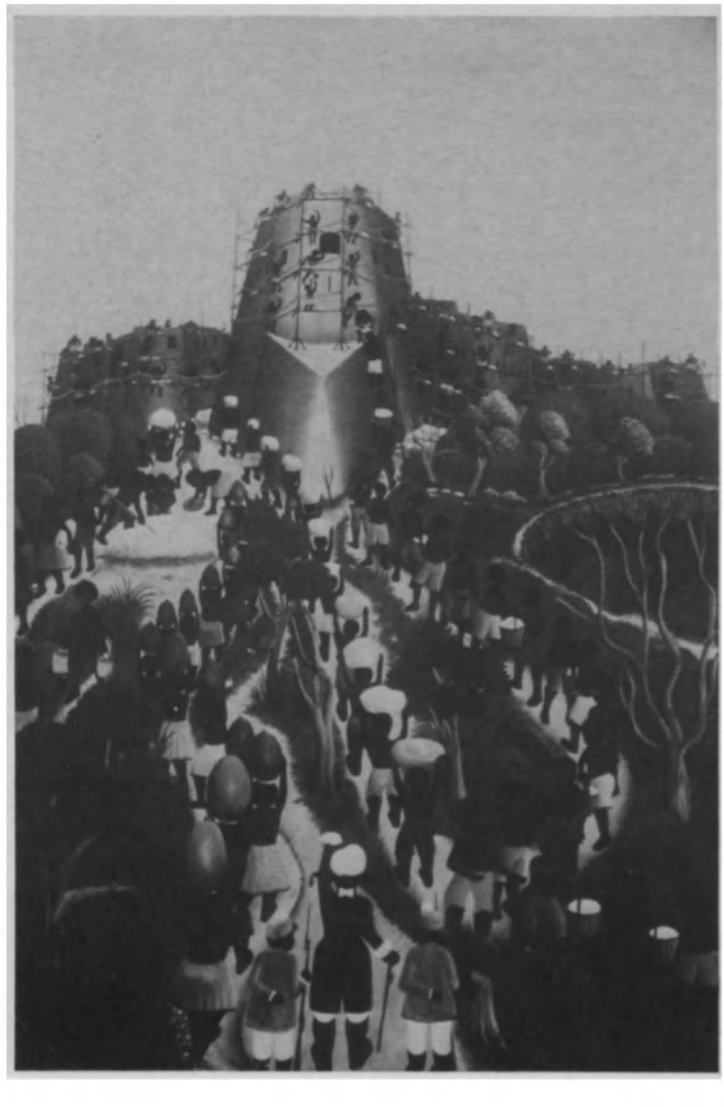


Photo Philippe Leclaire, Unesco

Slavery and sugar... the bitter aftertaste

by Manuel Moreno Fraginals

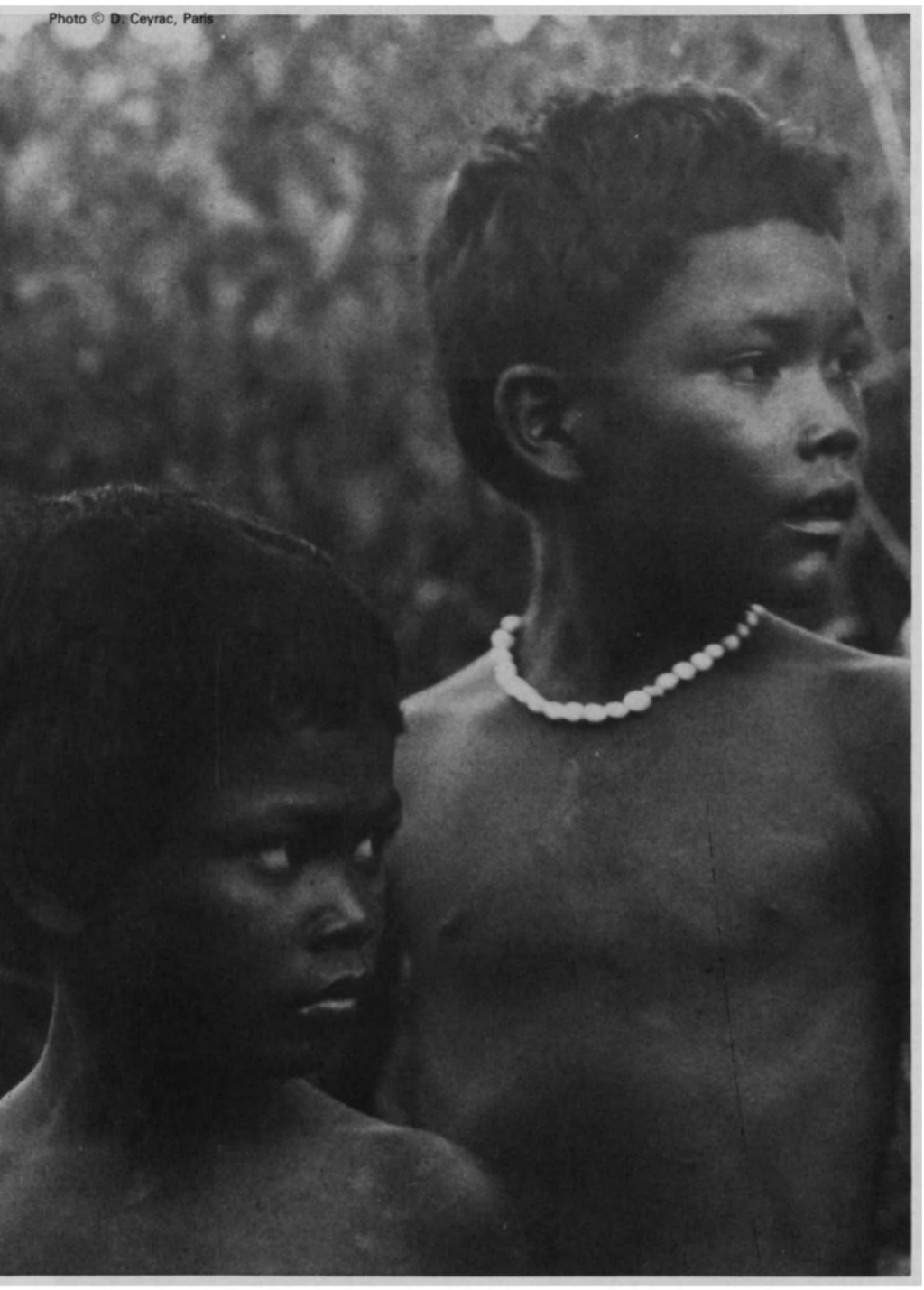


Photo © D. Ceyrac, Paris

IS there such a thing as a Caribbean identity? The question has often been raised, and the fact that it continues to be asked demonstrates either that there is no awareness or certainty about this identity or that there are forces that stand to gain by denying its existence. In our view, "cultural identity" is the historic result of the common evolution of common socio-economic factors.

The wide arc of the Antilles forms an island ecosystem with common climatic and geological characteristics and, in early times, with similar flora and fauna. From the moment when the Europeans burst on to the South American scene, the islands' geographical location made them the natural meeting-place of seaways to the Spanish Empire and, in a sense, the "imperial frontier". As a frontier, the Antilles were to be the site of the battles of the plundering colonial wars. Thus, there was an early stage at which these islands had to play a part in the Empire. But they also had exploitable resources, which, in addition to the role they played in support of the empire, were important for their own economic potential. During the eighteenth century, Cuba, for example, was the centre of defence of the Spanish Empire and an outstanding producer of tobacco and sugar; Jamaica was an island of sugar plantations and a key base for the English navy.

The islands' shared climate, their geographical situation in the arc of the Antilles and their similar physical characteristics made possible, in most of them, the development of the slave sugar plantation system. For this type of plantation required terrain with specific physical features; it had to be near the sea, have a particular temperature and degree of rainfall, have forest resources available, be near cattle supplies, and have excellent maritime communications between the buyer's market (Europe) and the labour supply market (Africa).

MANUEL MORENO FRAGINALS, *Cuban historian and university teacher, is adviser to the Centre of Caribbean Studies of the Casa de las Américas, in Havana. His most recent published work is* Distintegration/Abolition of Slavery in the Caribbean.

The islands of the Antilles were peopled by a common indigenous stock which was eliminated through a common historical process. The aboriginal cultures of the Caribbean appear to go back as far as 2500 BC. The colonizing process which befell these peoples sparked off systematic annihilation in which the barbarous exploitation to which they were subjected was accompanied by epidemics, the breakdown of their economy, the psychological shock of the conquest and even premeditated extermination. The extinction of the Indians in the islands colonized by Spain was widely publicized by the English, the French and the Dutch; but what was not made common knowledge was how the English, French and Dutch themselves systematically exterminated the indigenous populations of the islands they conquered.

On these systematically depopulated islands, a common economic structure was established: the slave plantation, a typical creation of European capitalism. Rather than being the invention of any particular European colonizing power, it was the result of accumulated colonial experience. The plantation system of the type adopted by the Portuguese at Sao Tomé was transferred to America by the Spaniards. The Hispano-Portuguese model was developed by the English and French (Jamaica and Santo Domingo are tragic examples of this development), and was later taken up again by Spanish colonialism, making the exploitation in Cuba even more complex.

This point is emphasized because historians tend to speak of different categories of "slavery" according to whether it was imposed by the English, French, Portuguese, Spaniards or others. There is only one type of slavery and its sole aim is the exploitation of labour; the exploiter's nationality is of little importance. We reject the idea that there are different types of slavery depending on the religion of the exploiter as well as the notion that there are "benign" and "malignant" forms of slavery. For the enslaved mass, slavery was always the same; the differences in the degree of exploitation were due to economic factors rather than to superstructure.

Nor do we accept any type of racial connotation that might suggest a preference on the part of the slave-masters for Africans. Africans were enslaved because Africa was the labour market that was available, cheap and near; when conditions changed in the nineteenth century Chinese and East Indians were brought in.

The same system of enslavement and commercialization was attempted with the West Indian indigenous populations. As early as 1494, Admiral Christopher Columbus himself selected fifty native inhabitants of Hispaniola (Santo Domingo), who were sent to Spain to be sold as slaves. And, according to Bartolomé de Las Casas, Columbus reckoned that by selling all the Indians of that island along with other merchandise he would realize profits to the tune of forty million *maravedíes*. As early as 1508 hunts for natives to be sold into slavery were legalized in the Caribbean. And if the statistics provided by Pedro Mártir de Anglería are correct, between 1508 and 1513 some forty thousand Caribbean slaves were hunted down and sold to work in the gold mines. Colonial barbarism resulted in the liquidation of the indigenous population; the small aggressive groups which remained

Photo © Musée de l'homme, Paris

Few traces have survived of the indigenous peoples, notably the Carib and the Arawak, which inhabited the Caribbean islands before they were discovered by the Spaniards. Within a few decades of European colonial rule these peoples had been virtually annihilated, and today only a handful of their descendants exist, scattered throughout the region. A few small but skilfully crafted examples of their culture have been preserved. Above, skeletal head carved in black basalt (22 cm high) was a religious or ceremonial object used by an Arawak-speaking people of the Taino culture of Puerto Rico. Below, anthropomorphic stone head (12 cm high, 17 cm long) from the Dominican Republic. It is one of the prized "three-pointed stones" discovered in the Antilles which may have been an animist symbol of the Taino civilization.

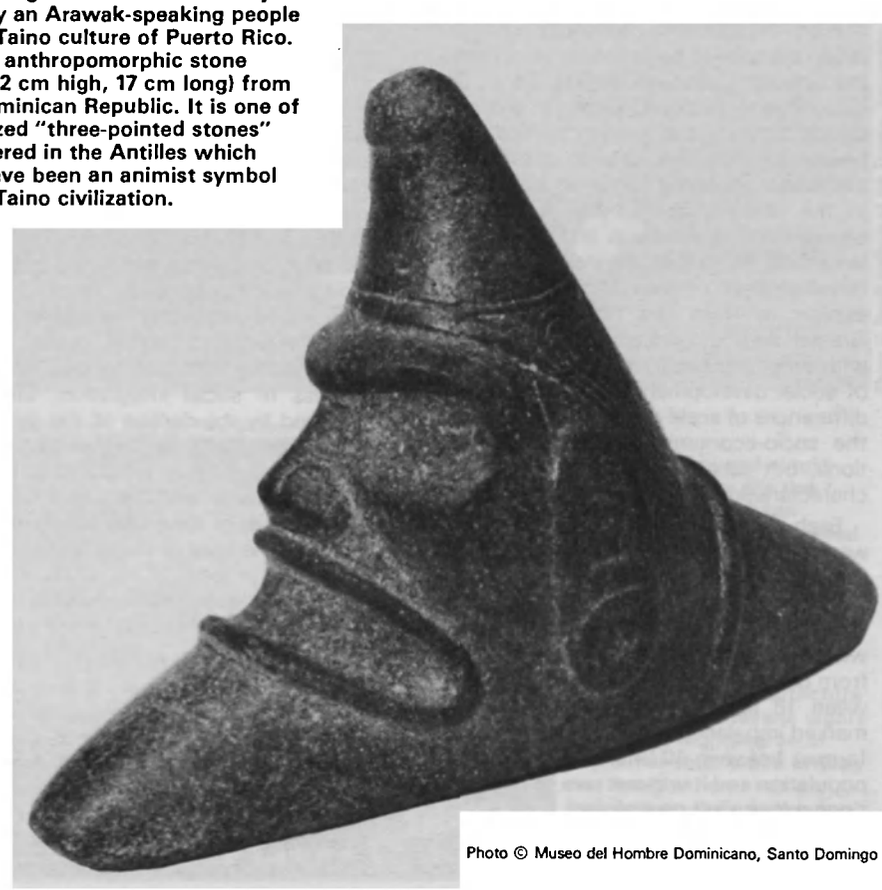


Photo © Museo del Hombre Dominicano, Santo Domingo

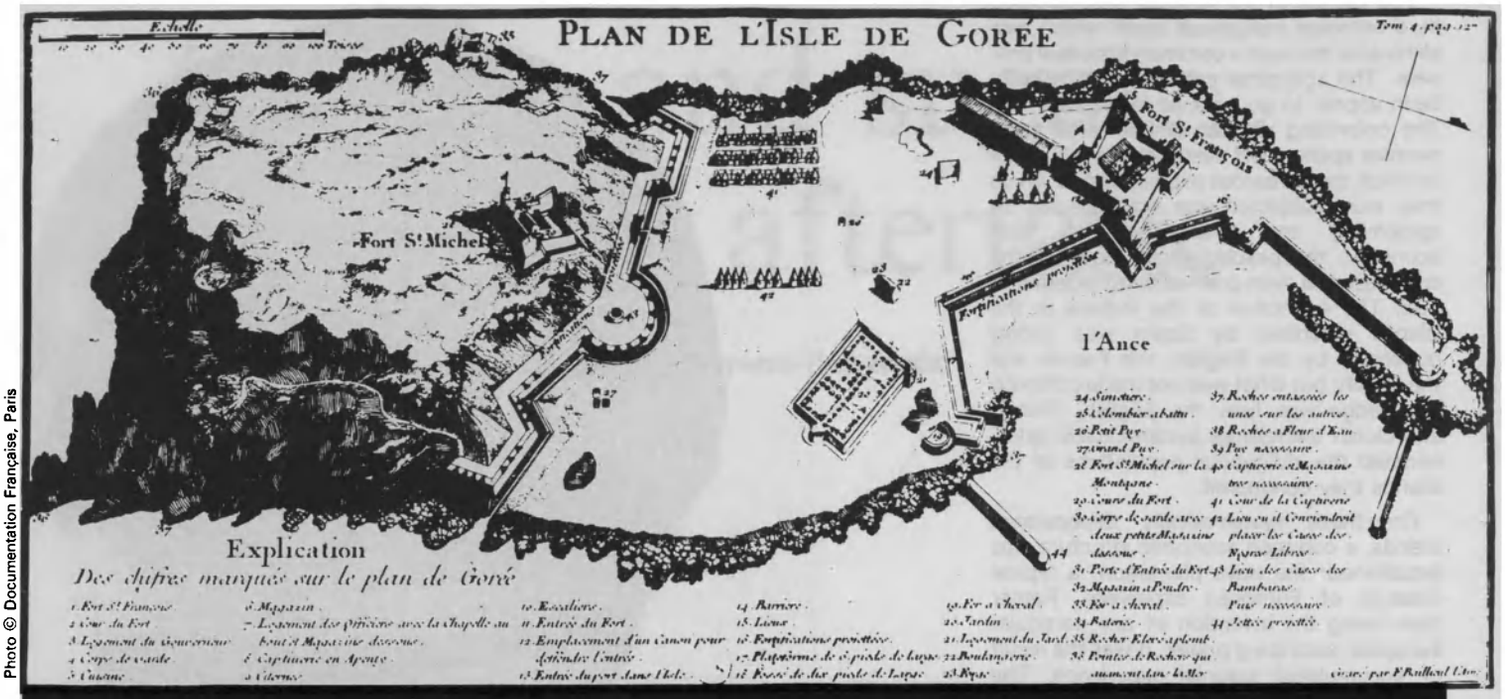


Photo © Documentation Française, Paris

From the 15th century on, various European powers used the island of Gorée, less than 4 kilometres off Dakar (Senegal) as a port of call or an entrepôt for the Atlantic slave trade. It was there, packed in dank cellars or the torture chambers set aside for those who resisted, that young Africans waited to be shipped to the plantations and manufactories of the New World, especially those of the West Indies. One of the great tragedies of history, the slave trade played a crucial part in shaping the cultural and political destiny of many parts of the Americas. In December 1980, in recognition of the cultural and historical importance of the island's architectural heritage, the Director-General of Unesco, Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, launched an international appeal for the safeguard and restoration of Gorée. Above, map of the island as shown on an engraving of 1779.

were a hindrance to production and they were exterminated in a systematic genocide whose most typical expression was that indulged in by the English and by the French in Martinique.

From the sixteenth century onwards plantation complexes began to be established in the Spanish Caribbean islands: Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and Cuba. In the seventeenth century the system spread to the Lesser Antilles, and later to Jamaica. The plantation economy began to be dominant in the islands. The Lesser Antilles were covered with plantations and there was no land left for other forms of economic development, or even for the slaves to escape to from the plantations. In the Greater Antilles plantation areas alternated with other exploitations and the possibilities of social development were greater. These differences of scale resulted in differences in the socio-economic levels of the plantations, but otherwise most of the common characteristics remained.

Each plantation, when it was established, was simply a collection of human beings and in no sense constituted a society. At this initial stage the plantation could be compared to a prison nearly all of whose members were of African origin, although they came from different ethnic groups, and were between 18 and 30 years old. There was a marked imbalance in the sexes; women only formed between 10 and 30 per cent of the population and it was not rare to find plantations comprising men alone.

Under this repressive system, working time was strictly regulated and leisure time was eliminated; diet was determined according to the economic considerations of the masters; housing was planned for economy and security, and clothing followed mass industrial production patterns; sexual life was subject to reproductive requirements; family relations were paralyzed by the imbalance between the sexes.

This set-up, typical of virtually all the plantations at the time of their foundation, changed with the passage of time. Clandestine hierarchical relationships were established among the slaves, bonds of interests and brotherhood were created, and the birth of children led to the formation of family nuclei, generally of a matriarchal type, since within the repressive system of the plantation a father could not take responsibility for his offspring. There was a process of social integration, but it was hindered by the decline of the group since the mortality rate was higher than the birth rate (a logical result of the imbalance between the sexes, and the prison regime) and new influxes of slaves became necessary to maintain the level of the work force. Nevertheless, a process of socialization was occurring as a result of one unifying factor—all were slaves and free men were excluded.

The plantation required an import-export centre which, moreover, provided a whole series of services that formed the infrastructure of the business. Thus there developed a kind of urban centre, in which both slaves and free men were to be found, but without the prison ethos of the plantation and consequently with different social relationships. Thus, the city-country distinction which is typical of all societies assumed a more definite connotation in plantation societies. Furthermore, under pressure from external factors (price of slaves, price of plantation products, etc.) and internal factors (economic viability of the enterprise, application of technological advances, impoverishment of the land, etc.), the plantations gradually developed until they acquired specific social characteristics that were common to all the islands.

Regardless of the social level they had achieved, the plantation slaves of the Caribbean were subjected to a common process of *deculturation*. By deculturation is meant the conscious process whereby, for purposes of economic exploitation, the culture of a human group was uprooted so as to facilitate the expropriation of the natural wealth of the territory in which it was located and/or to use the group for cheap unskilled slave or semi-slave labour. In American plantation societies deculturation can be seen as a technological expedient for obtaining maximum labour efficiency.

Deculturation was a conscious process used on slaves in order to deprive them of all identity. Their very names were wrested from them. Out of thousands and thousands of documents about slaves in the Caribbean we only found twenty in which the original African names of the slaves appeared. Their eating, living and dress patterns were destroyed, their music and their religion were banned, and their masters' language was imposed upon them. The slaves could only resist this process of deculturation by maintaining their original cultural values in

clandestinity. Thus began a struggle between the dominant culture which strove to be a factor of integration and subjugation, and the dominated culture as an integrating factor of resistance. This dialectical conflict was to be one of the basic sources of Caribbean culture.

This process cannot be understood, however, if we start from the classic traditional anthropological schema which considers that in such cases a process of "transculturation" or "integration" occurred whereby African cultural values were inserted into European moulds. The reality of the Caribbean islands was quite different. From the beginning it was a question of new societies to which Africans and Europeans came at the same time, the former as a subjugated people in a war of capitalist plunder, and the latter as the exploiting group. There was no pre-existing society imbued with African contributions. There was basically a system of economic exploitation in which the dominant class created a culture for itself which was also destined to be imposed on the dominated class.

Naturally, this culture was based on Eurocentric values and patterns which were reworked, re-created and updated in relation to the economic, political and social situation on the plantations. Confronting the dominant culture was a culture of resistance which stemmed originally from African values and patterns that disappeared, were re-elaborated or transmuted into the class struggle process, when they came up against both imposed deculturation and a repressive system.

And thus, at a given moment, the slave plantation system disintegrated. The process of disintegration occurred at different times and with different characteristics in the various islands. In some the plantations disappeared, in others they were transformed into modern plantations where the traffic in human beings continued. There were far-reaching migratory movements between the West Indian islands and new peoples were brought out to work in the canefields. To change the origin of the people exploited is not, however, to change the essential nature of the exploitation.

For these historic reasons, the descendants of the former slaves, mainly Negroes and mulattoes, constituted the poorest, most unprotected and exploitable stratum of society. Culturally, they were profoundly affected by different forms of prejudice and social discrimination. They were deliberately isolated and excluded, and attempts were made to stir up conflicts among them which would make it difficult for them to constitute themselves into a cohesive class. The cultural forms contributed, created and re-created by these groups were closely linked to the situation of social exclusion, economic exploitation and cultural rejection imposed upon them by the dominant class.

Seen from this angle, the essence of a study on cultural identity ought to lie in the analysis of the forms in which this culture of resistance endured or was used or re-created. Studies that analyse the symptomatic characteristics of this culture, but not its real structures, speak of "dual" societies or "plural" societies. These theories are supported by extremely interesting observations from outside, but they overlook the fact that cultural differences are not merely the opposition of

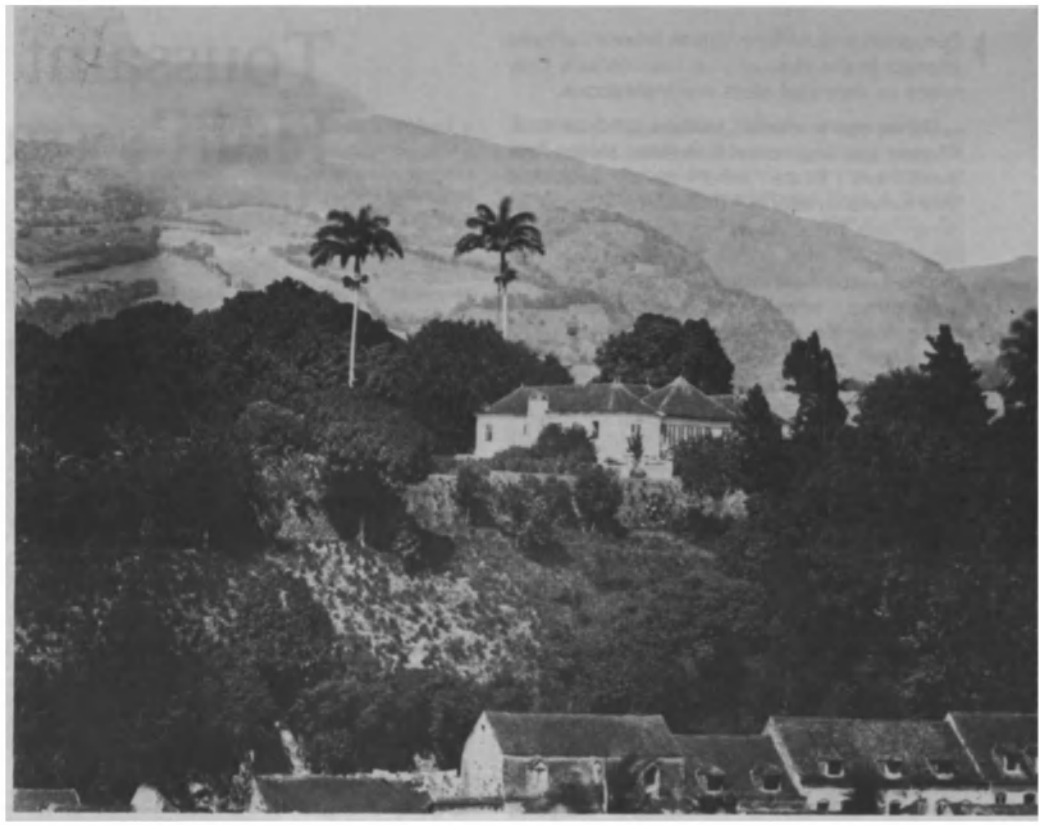


Photo Bibliothèque Nationale © Société de Géographie, Paris

The basis of Caribbean colonial society was the plantation, a closed world in which confrontation between white master and black slave shaped many aspects of the region's culture. This divided world revolved around two poles, in close physical proximity but alien in spirit: the "great house" of the master and the cabins of the slaves. The master lived in his mansion with his family and household slaves. The huts of the slaves formed a world apart in which the black labourers lived in conditions which were often inhuman. Photo above was taken in Martinique in 1882. Below, a group of huts in a Curaçao plantation.

Photo © Royal Institute of the Tropics, Amsterdam

Photo © Luc Joubert, Paris. Nelly and René Depestre Collection

Sugar, slavery and single-crop agriculture are the leitmotif of Caribbean history. But if sugar headed the list of crops it was closely followed by tobacco and some Caribbean countries, notably Cuba, have won a world-wide reputation as tobacco-producers. The manufacture of the famous Havana cigars requires a high degree of craftsmanship, while artistry and imagination are also lavished on their packaging and presentation. Left, a striking design for a cigar-box label.

European and African values whose cultures interact in the abstract; on the contrary they relate to very real class confrontations.

Other more idealist studies tend to seek African graftings on a European stem. And there are those who have dedicated themselves to listing Africanisms in order to determine how many of them, and with what degree of success, have penetrated into pre-established moulds. Then again there are those who, with a certain anthropological complexity, have elaborated the theory of social exclusion. But, as it has been rightly pointed out, "although many of these people have been barred from access to total participation in society, or even the most minor benefits of citizenship, they have never been excluded from contributing to the economic order". Indeed, their marginality as citizens is a result of the capitalist regime.

The role of the Afro-Latin-American peoples of the Caribbean as suppliers of notoriously cheap labour, and especially the movement of Haitians, Jamaicans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and others to the United States and to the capitals of Europe, has reduced the average total cost of labour at the less skilled levels. Marginalization has not meant taking away from these men their status as exploited people or creators of wealth.

Just as negative is the quest for identity based on colour ("Negritude") or remote African cultural roots, even though it originated within the exploited peoples themselves. These theories forget or overlook the fact that exploitation of slave or semi-slave labour was not a problem of colour, since whites and Indians and later Chinese, East Indians and Polynesians were also exploited and enslaved. "Negritude", which was early in its history a powerful and beautiful rebel cry of a group standing out against prejudice, has run the risk of being transformed into an ideology. The return to Africa, the recognition of roots, bring something of undeniable value to the Caribbean peoples—the identification of one of its sources and a sense of solidarity towards peoples who for centuries have been exploited and impoverished. But beyond these limits it loses its validity, for Caribbean culture is not African but a culture created and re-created, under specific conditions, in the crucible of the Caribbean.

Colonial or neo-colonial interests have tried to perpetuate the sense of Caribbean cultural diversity. To the real barrier of different languages has been added the isolating or distorting claim that each island feels and acts as an independent cultural, and hence political, world. In some cases, the effort has even been made to persuade certain islands to seek their identity in the metropolis or in foreign lands, and not in themselves. The real identity of the Caribbean is questioned and even denied. But the history and the reality expressed in their artistic manifestations show quite the opposite. Caribbean artists and social scientists today have a much more important task than a simplistic quest for African elements in their culture or comparative analysis with present-day African cultures. This task is the study of specific phenomena of integration and of common symbolic forms that have developed in the Caribbean during the process of consolidation of the new societies born there.

■ **Manuel Moreno Fraginals**

Toussaint Louverture Haiti's tragic hero

Photo © Jean-Loup Charmet, Paris

Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803)

The prophetic vision of Simón Bolívar

Photo © Roger Viollet, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Simón Bolívar (1783-1830)

BROTHERS and friends, I am Toussaint Louverture; my name is perhaps already known to you. I am intent on vengeance. I want liberty and equality to be respected in Santo Domingo, and I shall work until this goal is achieved. Join us, brothers, and fight alongside us for the same cause.

The man who, in 1793, at the age of fifty, was addressing himself in these terms to his unfortunate companions, had reached a point in his life when he felt ready to give himself completely to a task which transcended that of his own destiny.

Toussaint Breda was born on 20 May 1743 in the residence of the same name, at the place called Haut-du-Cap. He was a descendant of Gaou-Guinou, an African prince of the Aradas group. His godfather Pierre Baptiste taught him how to read and write. The French he learnt opened the way to such works as the *Commentaries* of Julius Caesar, the *Reveries* of Marshal Saxe, the *History of the Wars* by Herodotus and above all the famous *Histoire Philosophique des Indes* by the Abbé Raynal. The latter work represented an exceptional "opening" (*ouverture*) for his imaginative genius and for the name under which the slave of Breda was to distinguish himself.

In addition, his familiarity with his country's medicinal plants, and the rudiments of veterinary science, which he had acquired while working in the stables of his master Bayon Libertat, enabled him to exercise unquestionable influence over the Maroon negroes of the mountains once he had joined them. His small stature, taciturn and fragile air, and ugly features cloaked a great strength of character, combined with outstanding powers of physical and mental endurance which brought him phenomenal success when directing the operations which took place in Santo Domingo (Haiti) from 1791 to 1803.

The principal historical claim to fame of Toussaint Louverture is that he transformed groups of Maroon negroes into a seasoned and disciplined army of liberation. His consummate skill in guerilla tactics, plus a shrewd appreciation of when to compromise, enabled him to exploit to the maximum the colonial rivalries between the different empires represented on the political and military stage of the Caribbean.

The closing years of the 18th century brought eventful times to the colony of Santo Domingo where Toussaint Louverture had set in motion the irreversible process of emancipation. Toussaint was aware that the new power directing France since the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire would put in question the fragile conquests of the Haitian Revolution. His fears were justified, for Bonaparte lost no time in introducing a decree which made it obligatory to place on all the flags of Santo Domingo the following inscription: "Gallant black people, remember that the French people and only the French people recognize your liberty and the equality of your rights". Toussaint Louverture reacted sharply to this measure: "It is not", he said, "a circumstantial liberty conceded to us alone that we wish, but the unequivocal adoption of the principle that no man, whether he be born red, black or white, can become the property of his fellow-men."

"When Toussaint Louverture appeared on the scene", Aimé Césaire has written, "it was to take the declaration of the rights of man literally, to demonstrate that a pariah race does not exist, that there are no marginal countries, and no people meriting exceptional status. It was to embody and particularize a principle."

Such a universal extension of the law was quite unthinkable for Napoleon Bonaparte who dispatched an expedition to Santo Domingo under his brother-in-law General Leclerc in order to re-establish slavery. During the night of the 7th and 8th of June 1802 Toussaint Louverture fell into a trap set for him by General Brunet. Conducted on board the vessel *Le Héros*, he was taken to France and captivity in the Fort de Joux in the Jura mountains where, on 7 April 1803, he died of hunger, cold and nostalgia. At the moment of his capture he made the following declaration : "My overthrow means only that the trunk of the tree of Black liberty has been cut down. But that tree will grow upward once more from its myriad and profound roots."

A few months after these prophetic words, on 28 November 1803, Toussaint Louverture's right hand man, General Jean-Jacques Dessalines, proclaimed the independence of Haiti at Fort Dauphin. Such was the combat of Toussaint Louverture, "a combat for the transformation of formal law into real law, a combat for the *recognition* of man, and a combat, in short, which explains why the revolt of the black slaves of Santo Domingo found, and continues to find, a just place in the history of universal civilization".

■ **René Depestre**

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by Manuel Maldonado-Denis

SIMON Bolívar, the "Liberator", always believed that the freedom of the peoples of America would never be fully achieved if it did not include Cuba and Puerto Rico in its liberating embrace. Without the liberation of Cuba and Puerto Rico, those last "two jewels of the Spanish crown", efforts to rid the continent of the colonialist scourge would remain incomplete, in addition to which the independence of the Latin American peoples would be everlastingly threatened by what Martí, years later, was to describe as the tiger perpetually stalking the peoples of what, with his acute historical vision, he called "Our America".

Bolívar was by no means unaware of the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the Caribbean. On the contrary, his wide-ranging revolutionary action was largely shaped by his Caribbean experience. For example, we know of his exile in Jamaica and of his celebrated "Letter from Jamaica" of 1815, in which he outlined his historical plan for the continent and included Cuba and Puerto Rico in his illustrious scheme of things. We also know of his representations to the Haitian revolutionary Petion and of his pledge to free the black slaves on Venezuelan soil. The Liberator was utterly committed to seeing the whole of Latin America freed from Spanish colonialism.

In this context, the famous "Letter from Jamaica", which he wrote in Kingston on 6 September 1815, should be highlighted. In it, he wrote: "The islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico whose populations, taken together, must amount to some seven to eight hundred thousand people, are the most peaceful possessions of the Spanish because they are out of touch with the independent nations. But surely those islanders are American too? Are they not humiliated? Do they not seek well-being?" In fact, what Bolívar was doing here was to call for the liberation of Cuba and Puerto Rico since their inhabitants were people belonging to the concert of Latin American nations, and at that early stage in the liberation struggle, when it was difficult even to start to see the triumph of the insurrectionist forces, Bolívar's vision was inspired.

Reliable historical evidence exists to show that Bolívar never abandoned his commitment to seeing Cuba and Puerto Rico become free and sovereign nations. The Liberator even visualized the setting-up of a military expedition to liberate the two islands, but the domestic and international situation prevented him from carrying out his plan.

It should not be forgotten that at the time Bolívar's revolution was in its infancy, production throughout the Caribbean was based on the enslavement of the negroes. The only exception was that of the Republic of Haiti, whose glorious epic of emancipation from slavery culminated in the achievement of independence. A significant consequence of this was that, as one of the conditions agreed with Haitian president Petion, in return for Haitian support for the Latin American independence struggle Simón Bolívar undertook to free all negro slaves in the liberated continental territories.

Bolívar also conceived the idea of the Great Congress which was to take place in Panama in 1826. The aim of this Congress was to unite all the Latin American peoples in a great federation of free and sovereign peoples. But the United States was opposed to the independence of Cuba and Puerto Rico and accordingly frustrated Bolívar's historic plan.

Bolívar was a Venezuelan aristocrat who was prepared to abandon all he possessed in the cause of the freedom of what he called "Southern America", a Southern America that had ethnic and cultural features of its own which distinguished it from the other America, that of the North. The Liberator extended his internationalist and Latin Americanist view of things over the Caribbean, a racial and cultural kaleidoscope on which all the great empires of the period had converged. The liberation of Cuba and Puerto Rico was part of Bolivar's grand design, but forces that were too strong even for his extraordinary capacity for revolutionary action prevented him from seeing this part of his vision fulfilled.

As the enemy of slavery and servitude, Bolívar laid the groundwork for the eradication of slave labour and slavery on the continent. The great revolutionary example he set paved the way for the future both of the countries which he had liberated and of those that were still fighting for their freedom.

The history of the Caribbean would not be the same without the thought and action of Simón Bolívar. But, even today, there are Caribbean peoples which have not yet succeeded in transforming Bolívar's ideals into reality. This is why, two hundred years later, Bolívar's ideology is still relevant. Martí was not mistaken when he said that "there is still work for Bolívar in America". ■

MANUEL MALDONADO-DENIS, *Puerto Rican essayist, is professor of political science at the social sciences faculty of the University of Puerto Rico. He is the author of many essays about his country, notably* Puerto Rico, Mito y Realidad *(Puerto Rico, Myth and Reality).*

Photo Charles Harbutt © Parimage, Paris

Crucible of change

by René Depestre

THE map of the Caribbean is the stuff that dreams are made of. At this cross-roads of the planet, history has given rise to especially complex centres of civilization, with the baroque, the picaresque, the magical, the epic and the marvellous intermingling and criss-crossing one another with equal exuberance at the political, social, religious and cultural levels. Their five centuries of existence afford sufficient perspective for us to be fully aware of and to identify, within the West Indian archipelago, a family of peoples and cultures formed in the mould of history. These peoples and cultures were moulded, on the one hand, by the diversity and concordance of the material and spiritual conditions of life under colonization and, on the other, by the ardently pursued fight for freedom and liberation from those conditions.

For a long time our islands, the frontiers of five distinct empires, were defined, not in terms of their own intrinsic realities, but in relation to Europe, Africa and the other Americas. Today, however, it is possible to study, interpret and understand *from within* the internal system of values proper to our societies. The Caribbean is intensely present on the world scene in all its problematic singularity, its music, its arts and letters, its identity crises, and its dynamic thrust towards change.

Prior to their encounter in the western hemisphere, those peoples involved in the colonizing experience knew nothing of one another. This ignorance of their spiritual and physical characteristics facilitated the process of ontological misrepresentation which typifies the course of their history. The natives of the islands knew nothing of the Europeans or the Africans; conscious of being Arawaks, Siboneys, Tainos, Caribs, their surprise was, therefore, all the greater when they heard themselves suddenly referred to generically as *Indians!*

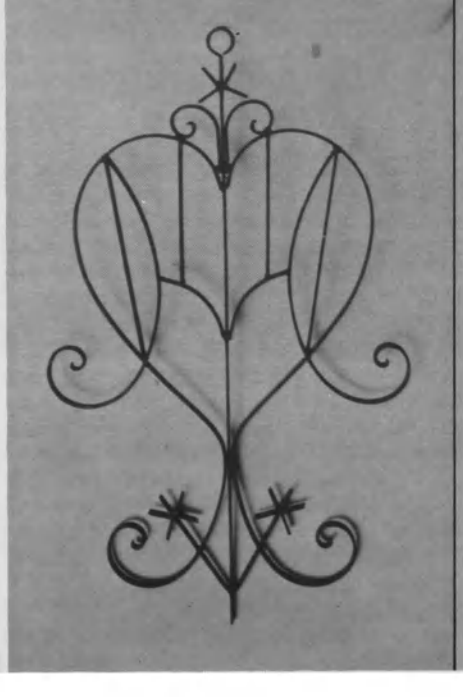
It was not too long before a similar semantic anomaly affected the self-image of the Yorubas, Bambaras, Ibos, Mandingos from Africa south of the Sahara as a result of their deportation under the existential travesty of being *blacks; negroes* or coloured people. Moreover, this tendency to identify members of the species "racially" had disguised as *whites* peoples who had their own ethnic specificity as Spaniards, French, English, Dutch, Portuguese etc. In the context of the American colonies, necessity wore a white mask. The ignominy and violence of this racial antagonism compounded the universal conflict of master and slave, settler and native, Prospero and Caliban.

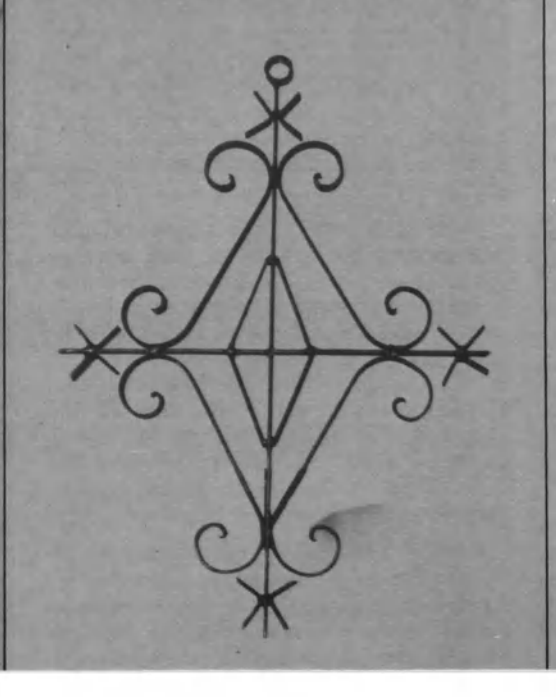
From this time on, the somatic features and physical appearance of Africans, Europeans, and natives of the Caribbean constituted so many *social signs* which served to identify the relationship of domination and dependence between conquerors and their victims. It became standard practice to argue for a cause and effect relationship between skin colour, the facial structure of different human groups and the particular forms of insertion into nature and society.

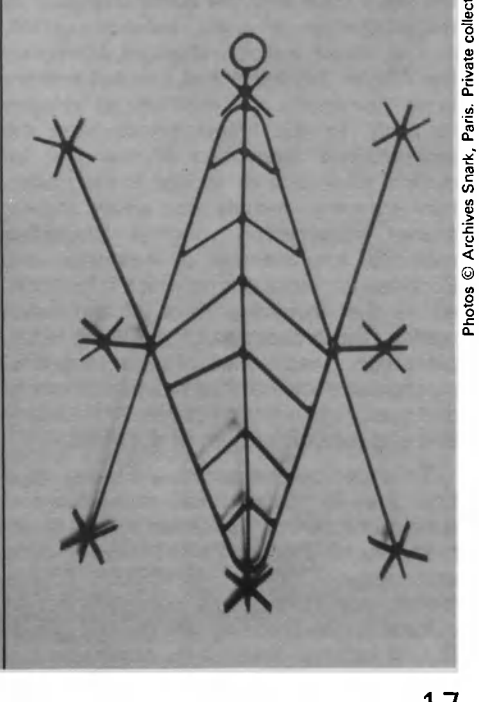
RENÉ DEPESTRE, *Haitian author, has published several volumes of poems, essays and fiction including* Un Arc-en-ciel pour l'Occident Chrétien *(published in English as* A Rainbow for the Christian West, *University of Massachusetts Press, 1977) and* Poète à Cuba, (Poet in Cuba). *He has collaborated on two collective works produced by Unesco,* Africa en América Latina *("Africa in Latin America") and* América Latina en sus Ideas *("Latin America through its Ideas"), and is currently a member of the Unesco secretariat.*

Photo © Alexis Stroukoff, *Vogue*, France

Dancing is so much a part of voodoo, the folk religion of the people of Haiti, that the Swiss ethnologist Alfred Métraux classified the cult among the "danced religions". In voodoo ceremonies (above) an active part is played by initiates known as *hounsis* (a word from the Fon language of West Africa meaning "wife of the god") who constitute with the male priests *(houngan)* and the priestesses *(mambo)* a fellowship devoted to the cult of the *loa* or spirits. Each *loa* has its own distinctive pattern of drumbeats and its own dances of African origin such as the *boumba,* the *gabienne*, the *calenda* and the *nago-grand-coup*. During the dance the women often seize the hem of their dress with both hands and raise and lower it slightly in time to the rhythm. The attributes of the *loa* are depicted in symbolic designs, the *vévé*, whose outlines are traced on the ground by sprinkling flour, ashes, coffee grounds or brick dust. Shown below are three metal *vévés*. The *heart without dagger* (left) is the magic attribute of the goddess Erzulie-Dantor, queen of beauty and love, protector of homes and fresh-water ponds. The goddess Ayizan-la-Grande (centre) must be invoked at the beginning of every voodoo ceremony. Like her husband Atibon-Legba, the Haitian lord of the crossroads and the meeting of the ways, she watches over doors, houses, public places and markets. *Vévé* at right is that of the *marassa* or twins, which have an honoured place in voodoo and are connected with the rain. Like the other *loas* they belong to various African peoples.







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Because of this reduction of the social and cultural conflicts of colonization to racial factors, the human essence of workers belonging to the different ethnic groups of Africa was itself reduced to the absurd notion of the *natural-inferiority-of-the-negro,* while the human essence of the settlers from the different nations of Europe was elevated to the no less extravagant notion of the *natural-superiority-of-the-whites.* In short, it amounted to a mythological and semiotic reductionism which supplied a basis for the ease of conscience of the settlers who had freely left Europe, at the same time that it debased and weakened the states of mind of slaves brought by force to the Caribbean.

This mental and physical "blocking out" was preceded by that of geography. Cheated of the fabulous East which he had set out to find, Columbus gave the name West Indies to the islands he took over. But when the totality of "the lands discovered on the other side of the Oceanic sea" were being named, the star of Amerigo Vespucci shone with a more brilliant light than that of the Spanish Admiral, and these lands were, therefore, called *America.* Everything took place as if Europe, in order to carry through its fantastic plans in the western hemisphere, felt obliged to disguise at one and the same time the field of operation of its colonial activity and the realities of the diverse protagonists engaged in it.

Thus, in common with the other countries of the continent, the Caribbean's entry into modern history took place under a false identity. Disguised under a multiplicity of masks, humanity in our regions acquired a fresh consciousness of the forms, contours and horizons of the planet. Europe's audacity permitted it to reap the benefit of rich experience in various agricultural, alimentary, astronomical, naval and military fields. It achieved a new mastery over land and sea; and navigation, map-making, and evaluation of distances, currents and winds advanced accordingly.

The plantation system represented the economic axis of this progress. The Portuguese had already tested this system on a modest scale on the island of Sao Tomé. Within the West Indian archipelago it underwent a spectacular expansion as a result of the slave-trade and the boost this gave to the production of sugar, tobacco, coffee, cotton, cocoa, indigo and spices. Moreover, the African biological fuel enabled international commerce and mechanized industry to profit to the fullest extent from the technological innovation of the first industrial revolution as applied in the plantation economy, namely, the steam engine, energy transmission, original lubrication methods, improvement of windmills, etc, For three centuries during which it functioned as the energizing force of the world market, the production of the West Indian plantation was one of the essential mechanisms for the accumulation of capital and one of the historical causes of the scientific and cultural success of the West.

To expedite this success, Europe tried first of all to "deculturate" the Indian and African manpower. Itself a territory of cross-bred peoples produced by the Graeco-Latin and Judaeo-Christian symbiosis, Europe feared, nonetheless, the consequences of cultural cross-breeding in the Americas. But, in order to advance its commerce and industry, it required an army of strong-

armed servants rather than an orchestra of coloured Graeco-Latins interpreting the spirit of their ancestors on the hills of the new world.

Representatives of what they considered to be a divinely-sanctioned political, social and cultural order, the Europeans had no intention of assimilating exotic models to their cultural heritage. They assumed that the Yoruba, Fon, Fanti-Ashanti and Congolese gods would efface themselves before the Catholic saints because all that was not *white* was barbaric or savage. Consequently, the descendants of Africans were invited to forget all about their past, to take leave of their own imaginations and identity, and to acquiesce in the dulling of their own consciousness and sensibility.

Fortunately, the socio-cultural process reserved for the Caribbean took another route. The new peoples formed in the Caribbean melting-pot did not entrust themselves to the providence of empires in order to forge the essential elements of a new identity. Caught up in their own problems and trapped in the "racial" myth, they did not believe that all that they had to do to pass from "barbarism" to "civilization" was purely and simply to imitate the behaviour, arts and customs of Europe.

Cultural anthropology has made much of the acculturation of the descendants of Africans to European models and symbols. Above all, it has advanced the idea of "reinterpretation" according to which the "African mentality" is seen as having remained unchanging in its relationship to work, law, religion, the family, and liberty throughout the long Caribbean process of cultural cross-fertilization.

This phenomenon required the historical inputs and creative energies of the descendants of both Africa and Europe. The cultural contribution of the slave africanized the consciousness and the sensibility, the mind and the body of the colonizer. In the same way, the innovations of the latter europeanized the African imagination. This gave rise to a dynamic mutation of identities which is perfectly summed up in the concept of *creolization* found in West Indian societies.

This notion of *Creolism* is fundamental in all that has to do with the knowledge, interpretation and understanding of historical phenomena in the Caribbean. The African and European heritage, transformed by the social metabolism of the plantation regime, culminated in original ways of thinking, feeling, acting and dreaming. As a result of the mixing of cultural elements inherited from the two continents, along with the pre-Columbian contribution, the Caribbean became that *New World* imagined too soon by Columbus, at the moment when his Europe was feverishly engaged in applying its masks to the history of other continents. The originality of the Caribbean and Latin-American world in general is the result of a sustained cross-breeding which enabled the oppressed peoples of the region to discover themselves by tearing away little by little all the masks of colonization.

Photos © R. Berger, Zurich

In Haitian voodoo, the *Ogou* (known as *Ogun* in the *candomblé* religious ceremony of Brazil and the *santería* of Cuba) are a family of spirits or divinities *(loas)* whose members are blacksmith-gods. The name of *Ogou* is often found associated with others, (such as the names of saints), reflecting the syncretism of African beliefs with those of Europe and of the pre-Columbian world. Opposite page, at the festival of Ogun at Undo (Nigeria) a priest has draped around his neck a snake, one of the god's favourite animals. *Chango* (the Shango of Brazil and Trinité) is another *loa* of Haiti and one of the most popular gods of Caribbean mythology. The god of storms and hurler of thunderbolts, he also protects the fertility of women and passes through cyclones and flooded rivers unscathed. Left, a fire-bearer joins in the festival of Shango at Ede (Nigeria).

Photo taken from *Chez les Peintres de la Fête du Vaudou en Haiti* by Jean Marie Drot © Skira, Geneva

Left, a painting from Haiti depicting the festival of Agoué-Taroyo, lord of the sea and the isles, fresh water, rivers, lakes, ponds and springs. He often appears to the faithful in the form of a fish. Among his symbols is a small sailing ship which can be seen on the altars of voodoo temples *(houmfors)* and which is carried amid great ceremony during the festival in his honour.

Who, then, are these Caribbeans who never allowed themselves to be Graeco-Latinized? What is it that characterizes them by contrast with Europe, Africa, the other Americas, and the rest of the world?

Today it is easier to describe the condition of our societies than in 1815 when, in the eyes of Simón Bolívar, such an undertaking appeared "at one and the same time extraordinary and terribly complicated." Since that time the peoples concerned have themselves decided to put an end to the carving up of their history effected by successive interventions of the colonial sword. They have looked for, and some have even found, adequate responses to the identity conflicts which the natives of the Caribbean have had to face since the struggles for liberation sustained by such men as Toussaint Louverture, Simón Bolívar, José Martí, Marcus Garvey and Peralte.

Today in the Caribbean, new methodological tools exist which permit the re-evaluation of the history of our societies. New conceptual frameworks enable us to avoid the ethnocentricity which consisted in bringing all reflection back to the *a priori* judgements contained in the ideologies of colonialization. The tenacious "racial" preconceptions which weighed so heavily on the concepts of anthropology and historiography are in the process of losing their appeal thanks to interdisciplinary research which has made possible an exhaustive knowledge of the extremely complex historico-cultural processes which explain both the astonishing diversity and the unquestionable unity of cultures in the Caribbean new world.

Much more is now known of the history of the movements of resistance to colonization which many generations of *Maroon negroes* inspired from 1519 up to the end of the nineteenth century. The works devoted to the *Republics of the Maroons* have destroyed the myth of the supposed spirit of resignation which, it was assumed, characterized the African slaves. It has been found, in fact, that the presence of the Maroons not only represented a social and political phenomenon, but also signified a spiritual activity which permitted workers on the American plantations to create for themselves a new set of values in religion, magic, music, dance, popular medicine, creole languages, cooking, oral literature, sexual life, the family and many other areas of social life.

In quest of a new existential basis for their identity, the slaves of the Caribbean took over and redirected the dynamism implicit in the anguish of the "negro condition" which had been invented for them, and thereby cultivated in themselves the universal sense of liberty. They discovered in the process rejoinders to the crises which threatened to dull or to efface their social consciousness and their sensibility. Like their predecessors in the Roman Empire, they imagined native religions of defence endowed with symbolic and mythological structures corresponding to their unfulfilled desires as terribly humiliated and oppressed men.

This cultural influence of the Maroons did not make itself felt with equal force in all of the areas of life and culture. The languages of the masters were not pervaded everywhere by Maroon influence, even if the very real impact of African languages has been noted in the case of the Spanish and the Portuguese of the Americas. With the exception of the creole languages of Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe, the *papiamento* of Curaçao and Aruba, and the West Indian and Guyanese "Pidgin" jargons, the Maroon influence on European idioms did not become general.

Similarly, the juridical traditions of West Africa, along with the political and economic modes of thought proper to the pre-colonial societies of the African continent were stifled. Techniques and arts such as iron-working, weaving, and statuary, sculpture in wood and ivory, and other expressions of the African genius, were lost sight of because of the "purely socio-economic sensibility" of colonial America.

The historical effects of the Maroon activities were not enough, either, to exorcize "Uncle Tom" attitudes, the fear and the shame of being "negro", the inferiority complex, imitative behaviour, and the forms of social ambivalence characteristic at times of the way in which Caribbeans behave.

To be sure, the slave-traders of the economic traffic have disappeared from the scene, but even in this period of active decolonization certain "elites" are, alas, engaged in imitating with tragic results the institutional models of empires old and new, as well as parodying mental processes completely opposed to the specific outlook and attitudes of those who live in our islands.

Nevertheless, the facts are there: a general renewal of mind and sensibility is winning out over the phenomena of colonial recurrence. Memory and imagination are busy finding new functions for the cultural heritages which our peoples have patiently incorporated into their everyday life, their work, and their most secret dreams.

The Caribbean basin—which a Manichean vision of history presents as lands in flames surrounded by a boiling sea—is in the process of living a new chapter in its historic adventure. At last free to assume its own identity, the archipelago in its totality has something of its own to express and is doing it with vigour in every field of thought and action. Indeed, the data of history, ecology, society, play, politics and religion frequently take on an epic dimension in the life, as well as in the cultures of the region.

As to the literary and artistic activity of the Caribbean, it is characterized by a sensibility which is Dionysian, solar and dream-like all at once, and which brings together within the same compass picaresque realism and popular surrealism. A dazzling gulf exists between the human being and his Caribbean environment: the elemental *joie de vivre* (in spite of atrocious social misfortunes) is found side by side with the almost erotic pleasure produced by a harmony of sounds, colours and forms. In this respect, and without underestimating the role of literature and the plastic arts, music occupies in the Caribbean the first place in the aesthetic apprehension of lived experience.

The Caribbean bow will one day break the last side of the triangle within which colonial commerce has hitherto enclosed its destiny and release, in every direction where fellowship beckons, its arrows of music, art, fiction and poetry. On that day the world will learn that the disorders of history and geography can be transformed into a state of health reflecting both the imaginative life and real experience of societies.

■ **René Depestre**

COLOUR PAGES

Opposite page

The farmer-god Zaka, seated astride his horse in the midst of a fantastic landscape, is depicted in this painting by the Haitian artist Edouard Duval. Both Zaka, whose family plays a major role in voodoo mythology, and his steed have the same dreamy air of mockery, self-confidence and, almost, defiance. Embodied in the rider and his mount are some of the hopes, truths and mysteries which sustain Haitian culture, quickened by the country's historical roots and expressed in works of painting and literature in which dream and reality are one.

Photo © Alexis Stroukoff, *Vogue, France*

Pages 22 and 23

***La Jungla* (1943) by the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam (right hand page). This famous painting is rightly considered to be a model expression of the Antillean sensibility in the visual arts. Lam, who was closely connected with Picasso and the Surrealist movement, here transmits the vision and experience of Caribbean man. Clearly discernible in the teeming mass of plant forms is a landscape with which Lam was familiar during his childhood in Cuba: the sugar plantation. The bond which unites the painting to tropical nature in the Antilles appears in colours and forms recalling the plant life found in so many Caribbean islands (left hand page). But more important than what the painting tells us about nature is the light it sheds on the intermingling which is the characteristic feature of the culture of Cuba and of the Antilles in general. *La Jungla*, above all in the four mysterious figures, conjures up the mythical world of syncretic Cuban religions. In this animistic frenzy, in the rust-coloured leaves and flowers, is the vibrant presence of the god Shango. But its specifically Antillean content apart, this work has been seen as the first expression in the visual arts of a Third World which had already understood the urgent need to bring together all world cultures to be shared as a common heritage.**

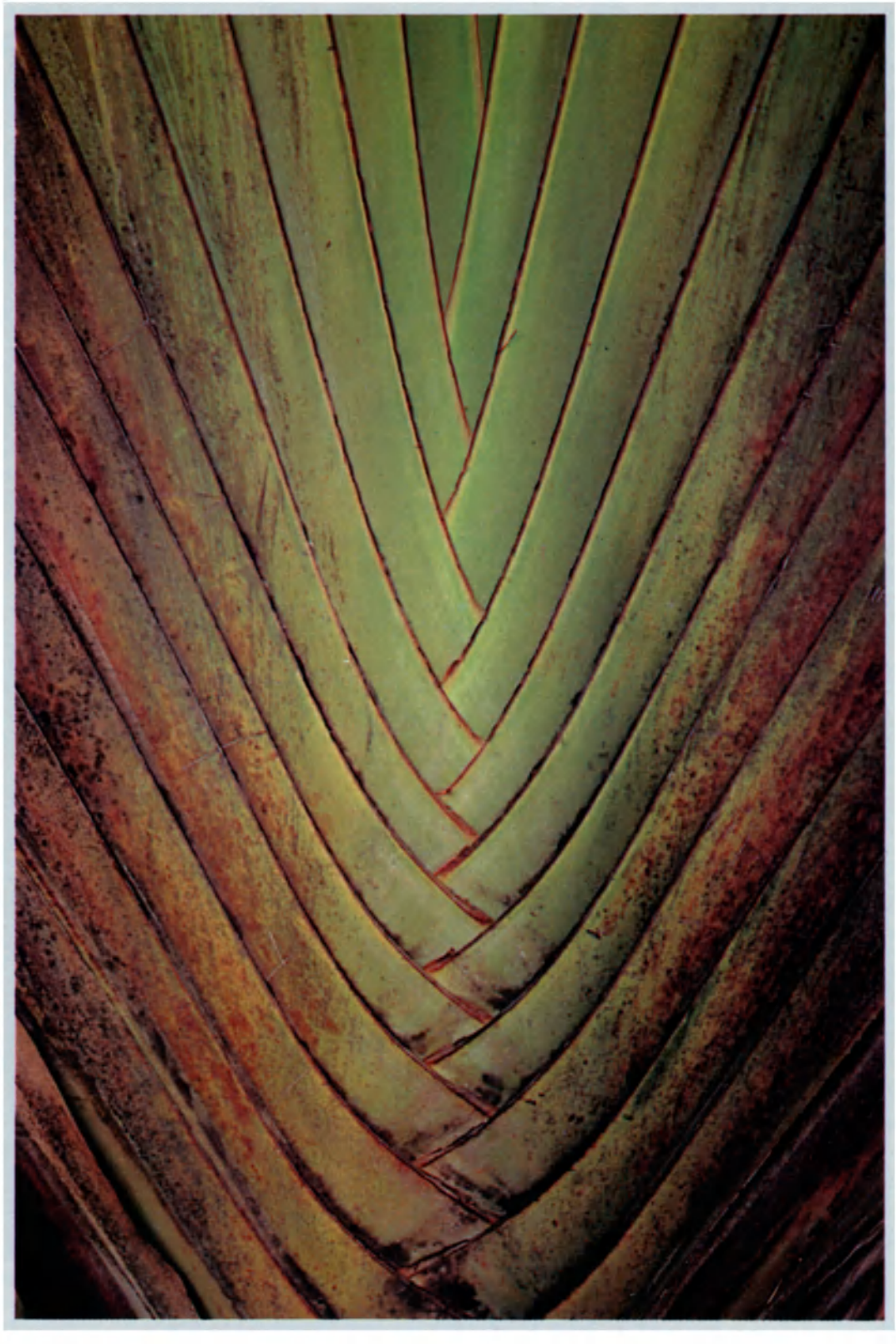
Photo © Yvette Vincent Alleaume, Paris

Photo © Museum of Modern Art, New York

Centre pages

The riot of colours, the exuberance and the bustle of this market scene in the port of Miragoane (Haiti) could be matched many times over on other Caribbean islands. The sailing ships are a reminder of the omnipresent sea, the very essence of Caribbean history.

Photo Michael Friedel © Rapho, Paris



'Ours'

The West Indies from within

by Marion Patrick Jones

COLOUR PAGES

Page 26

Salt-pans form a geometric pattern on the island of Bonaire. With Aruba and Curaçao, Bonaire is one of the largest islands of the Netherlands Antilles, where Papiamento, a language which evolved during colonial times, is spoken.

Photo Michael Friedel © Rapho, Paris

Page 27

Sugar and tobacco, the chief products of the old plantation system, are still a mainstay of the modern Caribbean economy. Above, the abandoned ruins of an old sugar factory in Tobago symbolize the collapse of the old world of the plantation. The mill, imported from Glasgow in 1857, has been overgrown by vegetation. Refineries today use ultra-modern techniques. Below, a tobacco field in Cuba, home of the famous Havana cigars.

Photo Michael Friedel © Rapho, Paris

Opposite page

In the Caribbean the exuberant festivities of the carnival have inspired the creation of colourful masks, images and other imaginative art-forms which draw heavily on the African heritage and are unrivalled examples of their kind. Above left and below, two images of the world-famous carnival of Trinidad. Above right, *Diablito*, a work by the Cuban painter René Portocarrero. *Diablitos* are masked figures who dance in groups during certain ceremonies of Cuba's *santería* folk religion. They display a striking affinity with the figures of the carnival, products of the same world of the imagination.

Photo M. Moisnard © Explorer, Paris

Photo Michael Friedel © Rapho, Paris

Photo © Miguel Rojas Mix, Paris
Private collection, Havana

THE sea lashes against the edge of the cliff as it has done for hundreds of years. Sauters it is called, Sauters, Grenada. Sauters—the place from which the Indians jumped when cornered by invading European forces.

The desperate battles of Caribs, Arawaks —rebaptized Indians—remain unsung. Their rock carvings have crumbled into the sea, their pottery is only fitfully collected. Names remain: Jamaica, Chacachare, Naparima. True, in Trinidad that mixture of Carib or Arawak and poor Spaniard has maintained for us corn, cassava dishes, the guitars, the dancing and the songs of Parang (1), the whirling of the Cascianne (2). There is little that marks the mass refusal to be enslaved at Sauters or the revolt against conquest in Trinidad. Indeed most Trinidadians still see the revolt in terms of "martyred" priests and therefore part of native savagery.

This is not by chance. Historical recording is always a selection of facts, not necessarily according to their actual historical weight but because of the preoccupations of the present. The difference in the case of the English-speaking Caribbean is that even after Independence, this selection is not made internally but largely externally. Nor is this simply colonial or neo-colonial selectivity. The Caribbean is seen by Left or Right mainly as the appendage of external black-white racial politics and ambitions.

The known heroes are those who principally influenced blacks abroad. The only way to be known culturally is to be published abroad, reviewed abroad, exhibited abroad. Yet, for Trinidadians, it is Beryl MacBurnie and her Little Carib that matters in dance and Ellie Manette and Spree Simons in music. Few Jamaicans can escape the influence in sculpture of an Edna Manley or of Louise Bennett in song. Bahamians remember Meta Cumberbatch in music. These stubbornly fought internally helping to create the Caribbean that is. They were among those who kept faith with countries that seemed to have no future in themselves or *for* themselves.

The beautiful island houses with their iced fringed wooden carved work, their tiny paned windows, their slotted jalousies, fall in disrepair, replaced by yellow modern concrete, except for the Great Houses of Jamaica and Guyana. For what does this patient art of the poor matter next to a black *aristocratic* tradition, priestess to chief, that must be established for external consumption—as in another age plantation owners built their own mythology of a white *aristocratic* past? Nor is this black or white. Part of "East" Indian tradition in the Caribbean sought for Brahminical princely roots. Ah, the two Naipaul novelist brothers! It was the peasant Orinhi that was *ours*.

Few people know of the existence of J.J. Thomas although, as early as 1869, he had established a creole grammar for a "patois" already under the pressure of English. His *Froudacity* (1889) laid the basis for much of the slant of Caribbean History, whether that of Eric Williams, C.L.R. James, E. Brathwaite or Walter Rodney. J.J. Thomas was born around 1840—two years after the final abolition of slavery in the British West Indies. *Froudacity: West Indian Fables Explained* was a reply to an Englishman, James Anthony Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (1888). If Nanny of the Maroons is now recalled in Jamaica as the woman who led slaves against British settlers and whom bullets could not kill, she is yet to be given the kind of recognition abroad that her military skills would earn her if she were a French Joan of Arc.

This preoccupation with abroad permeates the entire society. Caribbean history is yet to be given equality with European history, let alone allowed to play its part in the accumulation of knowledge. Part of this stems from the fragility of countries whose history is in part that of the myth of the naturalness of European domination. Opposition to this was often couched in a co-option but reversal of the dominant ideology. If the real centre of superiority was in the high culture of Europe, then the reply to this was seen as the equality of high culture in India and Africa and these continents as the source of the real opposition to Europe.

This idealization of "abroad", the real and complex problems of small countries, the high percentage of emigrants to "white" industrialized countries, the fear of the emerging middle class that they would be swallowed by the unrespectable were factors that continually prevented knowledge of the past, with few exceptions, from rising above the level of oral history and folk knowledge.

This history, this culture—*ours*—has been patiently created in a struggle that, for the most part, took place *inside* and which was principally a popular struggle with its

(1) Parang: Christmas festivities. Parang songs have a special rhythm and are sung in Spanish to a guitar.

(2) Cascianne: An old Spanish waltz still kept alive in Trinidad and Venezuela.

MARION PATRICK JONES, *of Trinidad and Tobago, is a writer, novelist and anthropologist. Among her published works are* Pan Beat *and* J'ouvert Morning, *Columbus Press, Port of Spain, Trinidad.*

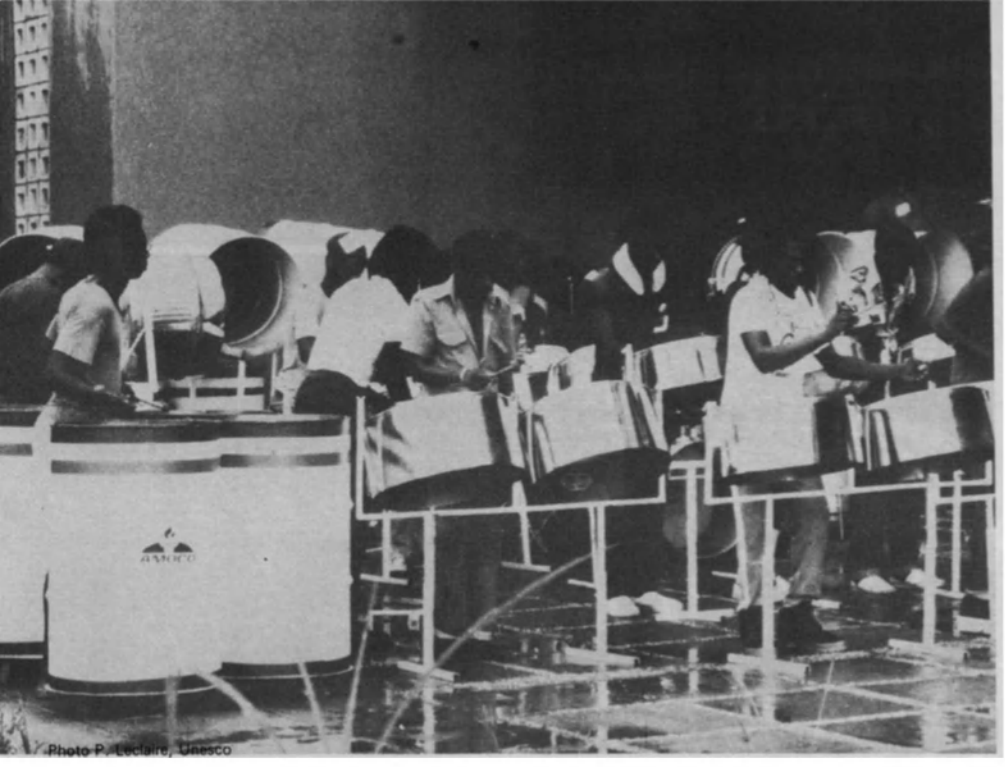


Photo P. Leclaire, Unesco

backbone in slums and barrack yards, plantations and small farms. It was, as everywhere else, a struggle complicated not only by race but by freed or unfreed, by class, by status. If the maroons emerge, because of the wars they waged from 1655 to 1880, as able to impose a treaty with Britain ensuring their freedom from slavery, they were also used by Governor Edward Eyre to put down, in the name of Britain, the revolt of 1865, associated with George William Gordon and Paul Bogle, for better parliamentary representation in Jamaica. Both were executed by the colonial authorities for "subversion".

The struggle in the late nineteenth century was part of the effervescence which was marked by J.J. Thomas culturally in Trinidad. It was in popular culture that history was kept, grievances given political commentary. It was out of this that what there was of élite culture emerged. Both were part of a political battle for autonomy, for trade union rights, eventually for independence. It was never simply a struggle against racial supremacy or for integration, although racism was an important part of the pattern of colonial domination. To forget the association between popular culture and politics or the dimensions of the political is to misunderstand the nature of society in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The 1920s and 1930s were marked by the paintings of Alf Cadallo, peopled with myth as by ordinary people, with the flambeaux, the crowded old barrack yards. The poverty that marked colonial rule became the ground from which beauty emerged. But, at the same time, Cipriani (3) was resisting colonial encroachment on the few areas of autonomy left. Alfred Richards (4) was organizing dockers into a union, there were yearly petitions to keep carnival going or to keep the paper carved temples of the Muslim festival of Hosea on the St. James street.

None of these were as simple as they now sound. First of all, they built on a past that had seen the Central Administrative Building burned down by the people of Port of Spain in a revolt against water taxes—the famous Red House riots. They mobilized workers, unemployed, the property-less against British rule and they underlined an important problem: trade union rights.

By the late 1930s working class dissatisfaction had spilled over in a series of revolts: a sugar strike in St. Kitts in 1935, a revolt against customs duties in St. Vincent in the same year, a coal strike in St. Lucia in 1935, a sympathy strike in Barbados in 1937 which became a full-fledged conflict led by Payne, revolt in the sugar plantations in Guyana in 1937, the dockers' strike in Jamaica in 1938. Uriah Buzz Butler emerged in Trinidad as the leader of a labour movement, a woman single-handed stopped the feared policeman Charlie King literally dead, while in Jamaica the strike had thrown up two major leaders: Norman Manley and Alexander Bustamante (each later prime minister of his country), and, let us not forget it, a number of determined courageous women who fed the strikers and without whom the strike would have failed.

None of these local leaders became heroes to the outside world. Bourgeois traditions of revolution have not accepted Gordon, although his arguments were along the lines of George Washington and of Jefferson. Left traditions have not included the attempt at a socialist group and a First of May labour parade associated in Trinidad with Richards, Achong and Jones.

This period also saw the blossoming of culture. It is parallel to this that emerges during the war years, in the slums "behind the bridge" in Port of Spain, the steel band. Created by the poor, steel band music, beaten at first on stolen dustbin covers—to the horror of middle-class Trinidad—accompanied the pitched gang warfare that had in the past marked stick fighting, and was to become in post-war years the national music.

This process is also part of the history of "culture" in the English-speaking Caribbean. The national cultural elements elaborated by the poor are first fought against, then are adopted by the élites, whether this is dance, song, music or food. It is reggae that is "Jamaican", Rex Nettleford adapts popular dance, Sylvia Winter writes her finest plays on the miming of John Cannoe, and who can forget the sensitive jewel of Errol John's *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl?*

Nor is it simply song, music, dance. Pawan's rabies discovery coincides with the 1920s and 1930s. W. Arthur Lewis in economics, M.G. Smith in social anthropology cannot be understood outside of popular problems or the fight to guide our own future. Both belong to the Independence struggle of the 1940s and 1950s. Their greatness and limitations stem from this.

But what of the men that led us to Independence? For they too fought against enormous odds. Take Eric Williams (5). Author of a seminal work in history *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams filled the Trinidad Public Library to hear his history lectures in 1949 and 1950. Fired from the then Caribbean Commission because of his "biased" views on the "Negro in the Caribbean", Eric "let his bucket down" in a series of lectures in Woodford Square. It is out of this that the people of Trinidad and Tobago argued that the only solution for the problems and conflicts that marked every institution was Independence. True, we had a bankrupt treasury, true we were at the time many fewer than today's million people, yet most of us had had enough.

This movement for Independence as well as the question of American bases which accompanied it was in itself complex. Certain well-defined segments of the population opposed Independence which they saw as likely to end certain privileges. This push to Independence was true in Jamaica under the leadership of Manley and Bustamante where it grew more directly out of the trade union movement and out of the strikes in 1930, in Guyana with Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan, Grantley Adams in Barbados. It was the push that collapsed the "Bay Street Boys" (6) in the Bahamas.

It would be optimistic to see the fight for Independence as finished. Rather the struggle to make our own history according to our own realities and to have this recognized as having a right of existence goes on. The acclamation of Independence, which began in the 1960s and which continues to sweep the region, is neither the beginning of a process nor the end of it.

We would make our own history. For we are Caribbeans. The golden poui flowers for one day—*ours*. We have saved with our susus, danced the limbo, drunk black coffee at a wake, munched patties—*ours*. We have created a language, hill Jamaican, Bajan Burr (7), West Indian standard—*ours*. This is, as one calypsonian put it, "our land and our grandfathers' land and our children to come land too"—*ours*.

Bury us, bury those to come unto the end of time, under the blue hills, the still stars of Caribbean night. For the hills, the stars, the sea hold the souls of ancestors who fought—*ours*.

■ **Marion Patrick Jones**

(3) Cipriani: Captain Cipriani was a Trinidadian of Corsican descent who fought in the 1914-1918 war and returned to Trinidad to fight for autonomy and against white privilege. Many times Mayor of Port of Spain, he is one of the most important heroes of Trinidad.

(4) Alfred Richards: Closely associated with Cipriani, he fought to improve the conditions of indentured labour and for the establishment of trade unions.

(5) Eric Williams : Dr. Eric Eustace Williams was an economic historian who analysed the relationship between free trade and the abolition of slavery. The youngest professor at Howard University in Washington, D.C., he joined the then Caribbean Commission whose headquarters were in Port of Spain. After losing his job there he founded the People's National Movement and led Trinidad and Tobago to independence. He died in 1981.

(6) Bay Street Boys: Of British descent, the Bay Street Boys, so called because they controlled the commerce located in Bay Street, for a long time dominated politics in the Bahamas to the exclusion of most blacks.

(7) Bajan Burr: Bajan is a local appellation of a Barbadian. Barbadians speak with a distinctive accent, or burr.

Calendrier lagunaire

by Aimé Césaire

I dwell in a sacred wound
I dwell in imaginary ancestors
I dwell in an obscure desire
I dwell in a long silence
I dwell in an unquenchable thirst
I dwell in a thousand-year journey
I dwell in a three hundred years war
I dwell in a disaffected cult
between bulb and bud I dwell in the unused space
I dwell in basalt not a flow
but the billow of lava
which sweeps up the gulley
and burns all the mosques
I adapt as best I can to this avatar
of a version of paradise absurdly come to naught
— far worse than hell —
Sometimes I dwell in one of my wounds
Every minute I change my apartment
and all respite terrifies me
whirlwind of fire
ascidia like no other for dust
of worlds gone astray
having spat out, a volcano, my entrails of spring w.
I remain with my words of bread and my secret ores
So I dwell in a vast mind
but I usually prefer to confine myself
in the smallest of my ideas
or else I dwell in a magic formula
the first words only
all the rest forgotten
I dwell in the icepack
I dwell in its débâcle
I dwell in the front of a great disaster
I dwell more often in the driest pap
of the gauntest pinnacle —the she-wolf of these clouds—
I dwell in the halo of the cacti
I dwell in a herd of she-goats drawing
on the teat of the most desolate sideroxylon
Truly I no longer know my true address
Bathyal or abyssal
I dwell in the holes of octopuses
I struggle with an octopus for an octopus hole
Brother lay off
Heap of kelp
Clinging like cuscuta
or unfurling myself like porana
It's all the same
and let the waves swell
and let the sun blister
and let the wind lash
round hump of my nothingness
The pressure, atmospheric or rather
historic is mounting my pain beyond measure
even if it makes some of my words magnificence.

Sideroxylon: a genus of tropical trees noted for their hard wood. **Cuscuta**: a genus of twining, leafless parasitic plants. **Porana**: a climbing herb of the convulvulus family.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE, *poet and playwright of Martinique, is the mayor of Fort-de-France (Martinique) and a deputy in the French National Assembly. He is among the most brilliant modern lyric poets writing in French. The above poem is hitherto unpublished.*

Fernando Ortiz 'The father of Caribbean studies'

by Lisandro Otero

THE hundredth anniversary of the birth of Fernando Ortiz was celebrated on 16 July this year. Ortiz has rightly been called the third discoverer of Cuba (after Columbus and Alexander Humboldt), for his writings, so scholarly and rigorously scientific, have been one of the principal factors in shaping Cuba's national identity.

Ortiz was among the very first people to observe the *mestizo* (intermixed) character of our culture and to point to our fragmented and dissimilar origins and to the syncretic nature of some of our popular beliefs.

He confessed in 1942 that, some forty years earlier, he had become interested in sociological questions, then a comparatively new branch of studies, and had started looking into Cuban problems. "Immediately, the figure of the Negro loomed large before me. And this was only natural, for without the Negro Cuba would not be Cuba." He began to study the Negro as an integral factor in the national identity and immediately came up against a host of obstacles and prejudices. There were very few studies and even less interest. For some people, it amounted to raking up consciousness of or laying bare the guilt of the past. Furthermore, it was something that was not worth the trouble and was not profitable.

In one of his lectures, Fernando Ortiz once said: "It was dangerous to talk of the Negro and it could only be done by adopting a devious approach. Even the Negroes, and especially the *mulattos*, seemed to want to forget about themselves and to deny their race so that they would not have to recall their martyrdom and frustrations, just as lepers sometimes try to conceal the shame of their sores...".

At that time, at the beginning of the century, when the Cuban Republic had just come into being, there existed a middle class which was dedicated to producing an idealized image of itself and to aping foreign thinking and behaviour patterns. Ortiz was the first person to display the rigorous scientific attitude needed to seek out the true roots of this phenomenon, and to have the audacity to proclaim their nature. His main contribution to Cuban culture was his understanding of the hybrid nature of our national origins.

In his researches, he left his mark on a very wide variety of cultural fields. After embarking on a legal and criminological career, he switched to sociology and then went on to archaeology, history, philology and anthropology, musicology and ethnography. Ortiz showed us the dynamic interrelationships existing between the different elements of the social life of Cuba. For seven decades, he explored, analysed and classified the new flowering of Negro cultures in Cuba, after their former African spendours.

One of the first problems with which Ortiz had to contend was the lack of suitable tools for his new task: there were no precedents and there was not even an adequate scientific vocabulary to describe the phenomena he was investigating. Ortiz coined such new terms as *Afro-Cuban*, which has now become so familiar, and *transculturation*, which is used to designate the symbiosis of cultures. The work he did in delving into the specific features of things Cuban led him into the field of linguistics. In 1923, he published his *Catauro de cubanismos* (Dictionary of Cubanisms), in which he listed 1,500 typically Cuban words and expressions.

His best-known work is perhaps his *Contrapunto Cubano del Tabaco y el Azucar* (Tobacco and Sugar: a Cuban Counterpoint), in which he not only formulated a penetrating analysis of economic history but also wrote some of the finest pages in our literature, subjecting the spirit of sugar and of tobacco, as abstract entities, to a dialectical confrontation, contrasting white sugar and brown tobacco, the sweet and the sour, food and poison, energy and dreaming, the flesh and the spirit, rain and earth, the sun and the moon, day and night, water and fire. The combination in this work of a wealth of imagination and a mass of scientific documentation makes it one of the landmarks of Cuban culture.

Ortiz the ethnographer wrote *El Engaño de las Razas* (The Fraud of Races), which was published in 1946, when the world had only just emerged from the Fascist nightmare and its pseudo-theories regarding the purported superiority of the Aryan race and the inferiority of the Semitic races: the former destined to dominate and the latter to be enslaved. The work of Ortiz constitutes a fundamental refutation of those theses.

Yet Fernando Ortiz was more than a scholar; he was an organizer and promoter of culture. He created several institutions, reviews and publishing houses even though the times were not propitious for such ventures.

His interest in the African influence on Latin America led Ortiz to undertake a profound analysis of the main area in which cultural elements of African origin were to be found in a concentrated grouping—the Caribbean. In this Fernando Ortiz was a precursor of Caribbean studies, and not only in Cuba.

Throughout this centenary year Cubans have been paying tribute to the vast, lucid and penetrating work of Fernando Ortiz. For Latin America, and in particular for that part of Latin America that was subject to influences from Africa, his work is essential for the light it sheds and the profound understanding it affords of the patterns and process of transculturation. ■

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Creative contradictions

The Caribbean genius has given birth to a new civilization

Photo © Société de Géographie, Paris

by Edouard Glissant

IT seems at first impossible to draw the boundaries and define the internal composition of the cultural and geographic area known as the "Caribbean". Does it consist purely and simply of the Islands? Or should it be conceived of as a broader expanse, including the three Guyanas, which are continental, and Panama, whose population is in part Antillean? Venezuela looks out to the Caribbean. Mexico has regularly joined in the now traditional festivities of *Carifesta,* held in Guyana in 1972, Jamaica in 1976, Cuba in 1979, and Barbados in 1981. The Creole tradition still sets off many nostalgic echoes in Louisiana. On the other hand, some of the islands, such as the Dominican Republic and Cuba, have until now appeared to show propensities for an exclusively Latin-American dimension. Four European languages (English, Spanish, French and Dutch) are officially used in the region, and at least five varieties of Creole are spoken there. What then is this reality which mushrooms out over the Americas, North and South, and which fits into no specific linguistic, political, or ethnic framework?

The answer which gradually emerges is that this element of indeterminacy is the very hallmark of the profound richness of the Caribbean. Or rather, that the indeterminacy lies in the minds of those who still envisage the Caribbean in terms of models that have had their day, in terms of outmoded patterns which made sense of the emergence of nations during earlier centuries in the West and elsewhere. The entire region has been agitated by fruitful contradictions, the work and results of which are worth pondering.

For example, it is naive to proclaim without qualification that here everything began with Christopher Columbus. The so-called "discovery" left a substratum in which Arawaks and Caribs, the original inhabitants of the region, exterminated by the colonizers, implanted in Antilleans modes of being of which they are often unaware.

It would be just as absurd to misapprehend the historical conditions of the new cultural area thus constituted from the period of colonization onwards, inherent in which are the intermingling of cultural elements and of peoples, tension leading toward a shared dimension of human experience. This intermingling, however, was not passive assent to the values imposed.

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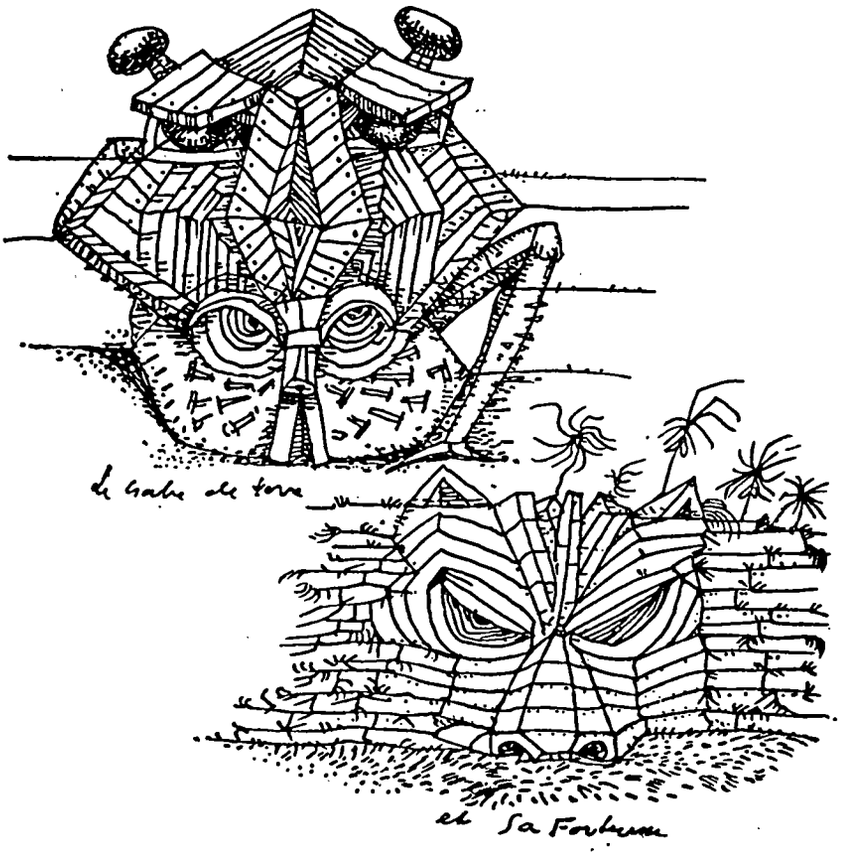
I awake, musing on the black fruit of the Aniba in its warty and truncated husk... Ah! The crabs have devoured a whole tree of soft fruit. Another is full of scars; its flowers were growing, succulent, on its trunk. And another one cannot touch with the hand, as when calling someone to witness, without a sudden shower of those flies, and colours!

Saint-John Perse
Éloges IV



Drawing taken from *Martinique Charmeuse de Serpents* by André Breton © Jean-Jacques Pauvert, ADAGP, 1981

Animal life and the plant world are virtually indistinguishable in the French painter André Masson's vision of the Antilles. In the mysterious beyond of the imagination, dense curtains of plunging lianas luxuriate in an impenetrable forest teeming with wonderful creatures. "The Crab and its Fortress" drawn by Masson, above, seem to have emerged from the primordial mud, girded with a wooden cuirasse. Woody yet members of the mineral world, they are nailed down by dry roots which climb to the horizon where they suddenly become waving coconut palms. For the people of the Antilles, however, fortress crab can be, literally, shelled: at feasts on the banks of remote streams it makes a succulent sacrifice.

It is equally mistaken either to underestimate the overriding impact of the peopling of the Antilles with Africans (starting with the Slave-Trade) or to harbour the illusion that the Antilles became a faithful copy of Africa. Not only because of the influx of Indians to work the land abandoned by the emancipated African slaves; not only because of the imprint left by the West; but because the ferment born of the component peoples has produced *something else* — new cultures, a new civilization.

Finally, it is not valid to conclude from the variety of languages imposed upon the region in the past or born of its ferment that the people who live there are heterogeneous. The Antilles today provide an example of a civilization in full flood of creativity, developing on a high tide of multilingualism; the languages are national (such as Spanish in Cuba or English in Trinidad), but their use, and soon their sharing, is Antillean.

These "elemental" contradictions feed many conflicts just as they have given birth to many illusions and ideological assumptions. The needs of nation-building in each country on the one hand and virulent opposition among social classes on the other seem to open up conflicting prospects in a situation rendered more complex by the necessity to affirm or defend cultural values which are often inseparable from their ethnic origins, and the elaboration of generalized theories (indigenism in Haiti in the 1930s, *Négritude*, Antillean outbreaks of Black Power, Rastafari).

Yet it is contradiction itself which constitutes the value of this civilization. It cannot be appreciated by sticking to hard-and-fast categories which make no allowances for the unusual. Perhaps the lesson to be drawn from the converging histories of the Antillean peoples is that nation-building can take place today without sterile confrontations, just as cultural values do not perish by being shared. The Antillean countries, which have known slavery and sometimes "local" tyrannies, have paid a heavy price for this privilege of cultural discovery and contact.

The Caribbean Sea is the setting for such a communion. The Saint Lucian playwright Derek Walcott has encapsulated this in a phrase, "History is Sea," and this is the meaning of Barbadian historian Edward Kamau Brathwaite's assertion that "The unity is submarine." Both these writers are poets intent on feeling and expressing the long ordeal of the Caribbean's emergence.

The sea of the Antilles is an open sea. The Arawaks and the Caribs roamed over it: nomads of the sea, they periodically returned to places they had previously settled during their wanderings. It was colonization which attempted, sometimes successfully, to "balkanize" the region, to fragment it into isolated lands locked in the conflicts which, here as elsewhere, broke out among the Western Great Powers. However, in 1794, alarmed by rumours, the origin of which are disputed, the slaves of the Lesser Antilles tried to reach the country of Toussaint Louverture, the future Republic of Haiti.

Many examples could be cited to demonstrate that the histories of the Caribbean peoples have always been intertwined despite the barriers erected by colonization. The Caribbean Sea, however, is not ringed by lands and peoples which would seek to concentrate in a constricting unit. It is not, as the Mediterranean once was, an "inland sea." Its propensity is to burst outwards, whence the difficulty in charting the outlines of such a socio-cultural phenomenon. The offshoots of this civilization, from Louisiana to Tobago and the Guyanas, overlie realities which otherwise belong to other spheres of influence.

But the cultural foundations of Antillean reality were by no means indeterminate. Wherever the slaves landed, on every island and at various points up and down the American coast, from northern Brazil and to the south of the United States, the same system was established for the exploitation of various exotic products: spices, tobacco, indigo, cotton, sugar cane. This was the Plantation system. It was not only an economic system based on slavery, but also a way of life, a cultural framework, which inspired many Antillean tales, as well as the dance known as the *calinda*, and the blues.

The Plantation was an enclosure which the slave or labourer did not leave. These enclosures were ubiquitous. *Casa Grande e Senzala*(1). With the establishment of the Plantation, two political and cultural institutions for escaping from the enclosure emerged: running away and the carnival, both widely practiced in the region.

Escape is not merely an episode in the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors. It may have determined in large part the attitudes and the reflexes of the peoples of the Antilles: it meant escaping to another enclosure, that of the intellectual and cultural compartments within which each people of the region was kept. The historical consequence of this phenomenon was the impassioned search for Caribbean solidarity.

The carnival was not merely the overflowing of liberated instincts beyond the limits of the Plantation. Little by little it reinforced the tendency to make every cultural manifestation simultaneously an act of consciousness and a festival *(Carifesta)*, an act of sharing one's reasons for giving voice to the world and one's conception of it.

From the Plantation came the tale, the ballad, and the cadence of the drum, soon to be replaced by the fulguration of poets such as Nicolas Guillen or Aimé Césaire, the fullness of folk artists (Haitian painting), the exuberance and the syntheses of modern arts (Wifredo Lam or Cardenas), and the analyses and profundities of novelists (Carpentier and Naipaul).

It is, perhaps, the memory of the Plantation that pushes so many Antillean intellectuals to expose themselves to the world of *les damnés de la terre*, and to identify with their cause: the Jamaican Marcus Garvey with the blacks in the United States, the Trinidadian George Padmore in Ghana, and the Martiniquais Frantz Fanon in Algeria. This kind of exile or noble expatriation is so widespread that one wonders about its fundamental causes — an urge to understand the Other which lies at the basis of the Antillean experience, and a desire to *break bounds* which still causes men to flee far from the Plantation.

Thus, if the Antillean countries whose cultural variety is so profuse, united and luxuriant, still appear to be seeking their identity, it is because of this very abundance which is often not given its due. And also because the collapse of the Plantation system has left behind it, here and there, extreme varieties of political and economic systems, the distortions of which explain why the reality of the Antilles is so hard to understand or accept. There is no indeterminacy in life as it is lived, but it paralyses those who analyse the cultures of the Antilles.

In the present state of affairs, no possibility of a federation or a confederation of the Caribbean countries exists, however embryonic. CARICOM (The Common Market of the Caribbean) mainly concerns the English-speaking Antilles. In political terms,

Photo © Société de Géographie, Paris

(1) Title of a work by the Brazilian writer Gilberto Freyre. It means "The big house and the slave's cabin."

Striding barefoot on the bare earth, this woman of Martinique instinctively adjusts her movements to maintain the poise of her head. On the cloth pad above her brow, for all the world to see, is the daily fare; her baskets are laden with modest treasures of poverty and dignity. Women have borne many things across the Caribbean: stones for the roads, coal from mysterious cargo boats, fruit and vegetables, the trials of everyday life, and the future of their children.

This work in ebony by the great Cuban sculptor Agustin Cárdenas is entitled *El Quarto Famba 1* (1973), the name of the secluded place where new members, chosen for their fidelity to the traditions of the continent from which they had been taken, were initiated into a secret society for Cubans of African origin. Cárdenas has produced such tall wooden totems, like black flames leaping from the African fire which glows in the Antillean consciousness, since his early days as a sculptor. Their form, expressive of both serenity and torment, marks the eruption into modern art of sensibilities which have not found artistic expression since the heyday of African sculpture. These airy, smoothly-finished works typify the contact between cultures that has inspired Cárdenas' work in wood and marble, and show how an artist can draw profound inspiration from his roots yet also practise the boldest experimentation, in an art that is both affirmation and discovery.

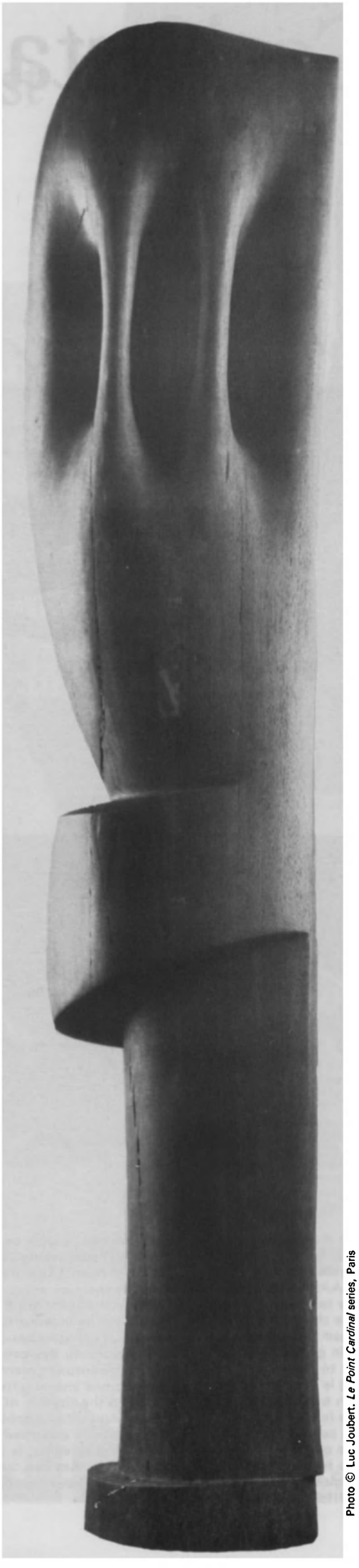


Photo © Luc Joubert. *Le Point Cardinal* series, Paris

the structures of the Caribbean countries cover the whole spectrum. And yet Antillean cultures have never gone so far in pooling their specific features nor communicated so much in terms of a single diversified conception of man.

This conception has culminated in Creolization, which is, as its etymology attests, an ambiguous phenomenon. Is the Creole a White who lives in the Antilles, a White born in the Antilles, or the descendant of an African? A long history of hesitation surrounds this question. Creolization is not a simple process of acculturation: it involves original features, in some cases the product of barely reconcilable contradictions, the chief of which, apart from ways of life and cultural syncretism, may lie in variants of language.

This phenomenon affects the languages which have been imported into the region, and which, as I have said, are sometimes used in very special way. But its most extreme expression lies in the diversity of pidgins and especially in the existence of the Creole language, a language of compromise, a language forged within the Plantation, which the Antillean people adopted in Haiti, in Martinique and Guadeloupe, in Cayenne, Saint Lucia, and Dominica.

Today this folk language is disappearing in Trinidad and Jamaica, and it has never been spoken in the Spanish-speaking Antilles. Nonetheless, the world's tens of millions of Creole speakers (including, as the result of a strange and significant socio-historical phenomenon, the inhabitants of Réunion and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean) can now envisage a renaissance for their mother tongue, a renaissance admittedly threatened by the technological weight of the world's dominant languages.

The fact that the same Creole language is spoken by the English-speaking peoples of the Lesser Antilles is sufficient proof that it has nothing to do with the patois formed from the major languages, to which there have often been attempts to reduce the compromise languages which emerged in the context of colonization. Creole is not a deformation of French, from which its syntax, reputedly of African origin, is totally alien.

Thus, in the present world configuration, the Caribbean stands forth as a special setting in which nations and communities interrelate, each with its own originality, sharing nevertheless a common future. This area of civilization opens onto the Americas; it is gradually surmounting the barriers of a paralyzing monolingualism and becoming conscious of its singular talent for symbiosis and for embracing, in all their overwhelming exuberance, the often contradictory elements which meet in the converging histories of the Caribbean basin. In today's threatened world this is a noble calling, at once fragile and ineradicable.

■ **Edouard Glissant**

Carifesta

1 2

Photos Unesco. Taken from *Carifesta 81*

3 4

Photos above are stills from a Unesco film made during the fourth Caribbean Festival of Arts ("CARIFESTA"), held at Bridgetown, Barbados from 19 July to 3 August 1981. Now a regular event in the region's cultural calendar, CARIFESTA offers the Caribbean artistic community an opportunity to present their work to a wide audience, and its success reflects the growing consciousness of cultural potential that has spread through the Caribbean in recent years. If the Caribbean arts in general are the product of a fruitful synthesis of what has come to the region from Africa, India and Europe, this intermingling is perhaps seen most strikingly of all in dance, an art form which transcends language barriers and national boundaries. There is above all a rich African heritage of ritual dancing which has survived as each generation made an effort to preserve the beliefs of their ancestors. Photos 1 and 2 show the ganga dance from Trinidad and Tobago. It is a tribute to Ogun, the mythological god of iron in the pantheon of the Yoruba people of West Africa. During such dances *orishas* or spiritual powers descend among the mortals, "possessing" and transforming them for a period which may last from a few minutes to several hours. Another thread in the rich skein of influences (photo 4, dancers from Trinidad and Tobago) was brought by the East Indians who came to the Caribbean as indentured labourers in the 19th and early 20th century. European dance movements also made their contribution to this process of cross-fertilization. During the 18th and 19th centuries planters kept abreast of European social conventions and at glittering *soirées* in their great mansions glided to the rhythm of the polka, the mazurka, the quadrille, the minuet and other popular dances of the period. The influence of these dances, observed, adapted and interpreted by African slaves and servants, is still strong today. (3) Dancers from the Netherlands Antilles, where African rhythms and European movements have combined in an original form of expression.

Legacy of the past

A corner of historic Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second city

Photo M. Moisnard © Explorer, Paris

Photo Krafft © Explorer, Paris

St. Mary's Roman Catholic church at Kingstown, capital of St. Vincent

Photos Michael Friedel © Rapho, Paris

Waterfront houses in Willemstad, capital of the Netherlands Antilles

The town of Trinidad, Cuba, was founded by the Spaniards in 1514

Caliban's revenge

by Roberto Fernández Retamar

AT the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of the first actions of the victorious revolutionaries of Saint-Domingue, the French part of the island of Hispaniola, was to re-baptize their fledgling nation *Haiti*, the name by which it had been known by its original inhabitants.

More than a century and a half later, the victorious revolutionaries of Cuba (which had kept its original name) were to change the names of the suburbs round the capital, Havana. *Country* and *Biltmore,* the residential areas of those who had benefited from the social order that had been swept away, resumed their ancient names of *Cubancan* and *Siboney*.

This sanctioning of liberation struggles by the elimination of place-names of European origin (or, in the case of Cuba, of both European and North American origin) and the reinstatement of names connected with the true discoverers of the region has been a repeated practice in the Antilles. Yet, curiously enough, neither the inhabitants of Cuba nor those of Haiti had any ethnic links with those peoples whose words and names they brandished to proclaim their determination to achieve complete independence.

The landing of the Europeans in the Antilles—the misnamed "discovery"—had heralded the arrival of what the Cuban José Martí, writing in 1877, described as a "devastating civilization, two words which are a contradiction in terms and therefore, in themselves, an indictment of a historical process". And indeed, subjected as they were to forced labour, hunted down like wild animals, defending themselves in vain against vastly superior arms, driven to mass suicide or succumbing to contagious diseases previously unknown to them, the indigenous peoples (mistakenly called "Indians" by the Westerners) had been virtually annihilated within a few decades of the arrival of the Europeans. Yet they left behind them words (many of which have entered the European languages), the cultivation of a variety of plants, some artefacts, and habits such as smoking.

Neither the Haitians nor the Cubans could, then, have been intent merely on renewing a tradition that had been cut short centuries earlier with the extermination of the peoples who had given birth to it and kept it alive. But the reintroduction of ancient words and names harks back to the old controversy about the "noble savage" which is inextricably bound up with all our part of America and especially with the Caribbean. It was sparked off by the sudden arrival in Europe, at a time when capitalist development was in its infancy, of news of a "New World".

The first peoples of this "New World" whom the Europeans came to know were the inhabitants of the Antilles. There is a reference to them in the letter, dated 15 February 1493, in which Christopher Columbus, writing from his ship off the Canary Islands, announced his "discovery" to Europe.

These peoples formed two main communities which had spread out into the Antilles from the northern part of South America—the Arahuacos (Arawaks), who also included the Siboneyes (or Ciboneyes) and the Tainos, and the Caribs, who were eventually to give their name to the

"Mediterranean of the Americas". The first of these peoples were of a peaceful disposition, whereas the second were warlike. They were to form the basis of the two main images of the peoples of America which fuelled the discussions of European thinkers for centuries.

The first stirrings of this controversy arose among the Spanish in the sixteenth century and centred on the conquest and rights of the misnamed "Indians". Among those who spoke out on behalf of the Indians were men like Bartolomé de Las Casas, the most dynamic and celebrated among them, Francisco de Vitoria, and Antonio Montesino, who in a sermon delivered in 1511 convinced Las Casas of the rightness of his cause. Among those who were against the Indians, and hence in favour of enslaving them, were men like Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo and Ginés de Sepúlveda. The fiercest polemic was that between Sepúlveda and Las Casas, the man whom Simón Bolívar called the "Apostle of the Americas", for his brave defence of our indigenous peoples.

The repercussions of the reports on these peoples of another world were not confined to Spain alone. As early as 1516, the Englishman Thomas More conjured up his vision of an ideal country, *Utopia*, whose resemblance to the island of Cuba was pointed out in 1963 by the Argentine writer Ezequiel Martinez Estrada. Moreover, in 1580, the French humanist Michel de Montaigne published his essay *Des Cannibales*, in which he wrote that "there is nothing barbaric or savage about those nations, from what has been said about them; what happens is that people brand as barbaric everything alien to their own customs".

This assessment, with variations, was kept alive as a sort of working hypothesis by what we would now call the left wing of the Western bourgeoisie in its revolutionary advance and appears to have reached its culmination in 1754, when Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote for the Academy of Dijon an essay answering the questions: *What is the origin of the inequality between men? Is it sanctioned by natural law?*

Rousseau has been saddled with the reputation of having lapsed into inane and ingenuous thinking about the purported excellence of the "noble savage". Yet when we read what he wrote, he cannot be taxed with having held such ideas. Perhaps more than anybody else, he stressed the hypothetical nature of such a creature. In his view, "it is not a simple matter to distinguish what is original from what is artificial in the existing nature of man or to be perfectly acquainted with a state *that does not exist, has perhaps not existed, and probably never will...*" (author's italics).

There can be no doubt, however, that in developing his hypothesis, Rousseau often had in mind the American peoples encountered by the Europeans, especially the inhabitants of the Caribbean, although —and this is very revealing—he would also make reference to the Black African. The examples he adduced for his "noble savage" are sometimes "black" and sometimes (or at the same time) the "Caribs of Venezuela", the "Hottentots of the Cape of Good Hope" and, on yet other occasions, the "savages of America", the latter being the most frequently cited. He was to refer repeatedly to these peoples, and especially to the Caribs who, in his view, were "of existing peoples, those who are least remote from their natural state".

Rousseau's thesis is well known: "those who were responsible for civilizing man... were responsible for losing humankind". His work is a condemnation of what, until then, had been regarded as civilization and the heralding of a fresh start which would preserve the goodness of the natural man in a new stage of development. The course of history being what it was, this new start was to be nothing other than the great bourgeois revolution of 1789.

The Europeans' rather hazy perception of the peoples they encountered on their arrival in the Caribbean was to be used—from More (in whose *Utopia* slavery still exists) right through to Rousseau—to defend the notion of the original goodness of the human being, which had been corrupted by society as Europeans knew it, and to form the theoretical basis of a new society. At the same time another very different view of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean was evolving, at first in parallel with the Rousseauist view, but then diverging from it and transcending the context of the Caribbean and even the Americas as a whole. This view, like the first, originated with Columbus who, when translating into a European language what he heard the indigenous people say in a language (Taino) he did not know, mentioned the existence of *Caribs*, whom he also called *Canibas* "the people of the Great Can" (The Great Khan—it should not be forgotten that, on his first voyage, Columbus thought that he had arrived in Asia) and *cannibals*, very fierce peoples who were said to eat human flesh.

Whereas the other inhabitant of the Antilles was the conjectural "noble savage", this one was the no less conjectural "ignoble savage", regarding whom the most determined opponent of Las Casas, Ginés de Sepúlveda, resuscitating Artistotle's thesis of the natural-born slave, wrote: "The Spanish are perfectly right to exercise their dominion over these barbarians... who are so inferior to the Spanish in moderation, intelligence and all manner of virtue and human sentiments that they are as children to adults, women to men, the cruel and inhumane to the exceedingly meek, the exaggeratedly intemperate to the continent and moderate, in short, I was about to say as monkeys to men".

This "ignoble savage" was to be given a literary incarnation as Caliban in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. Shakespeare's Caliban/Carib/cannibal is a misshapen monster imitating man, a creature whom the European enchanter, Prospero, has robbed of his island home and has taught to speak his (Prospero's) language and who owes his survival to the fact that his labours are essential to his master. Perhaps never before or since has a major literary work shown the frightening reality of colonialism in so clear a light.

The cannibal/Caliban is the hypothetical creation of the right wing of the nascent Western bourgeoisie which spread its exploiting Prosperos and exploited Calibans all over the earth. And here it must be recalled that while the basis for Rousseau's hypothesis of the "noble savage" was sought in the examples of the aborigines of the Antilles and Black Africans, the substantive *cannibal*, in the sense of a bestial man-eater, was to be applied not only to the Caribs—whatever the etymology is worth—but above all to the caricatures of Africans with which people throughout the world became familiar through the seemingly innocuous Tarzan films.

It was the sad destiny of the first inhabitants of our region to have inspired admirably evocative verses and celebrated works of art for the burgeoning European bourgeoisie and yet to have failed to survive the brutal impact of its "devastating civilization". Since they had been decimated and since fresh Calibans were needed as labour, millions of Africans were uprooted from their great continent and were set down as slaves in our region, and not a few Asians subsequently suffered the same fate. The Caribbean peoples of today were born of the still-continuing mix of the descendants of European oppressors and African and Asian oppressed. Only in this harsh light is it possible to understand why the first country of the Antilles to gain its independence and the first to introduce a new social order have both reclaimed their pre-Western heritage, the painful heritage of the exterminated Caliban who discovered and enriched the places where we now live.

However, that heritage alone cannot account for the cultural identity of the Caribbean following the arrival of the Europeans. The new Caribbean is one of the three main areas forming what we call "our America". These areas have been termed Indo-America, Afro-America and Euro-America and correspond on our sub-continent to what the Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro has called pilot peoples, new peoples and transplanted peoples.

What these peoples have in common is that they were first colonized and then neo-colonized, and were yoked, as exploited territory, to the world capitalist system. What they also have in common are a large number of features of widely differing character, and this is why they form a unit. ▶

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Caribbean countries and peoples today are grappling with a legacy of economic dependency created in the past by the single-crop plantation economy and their status as mere appendages of their colonial masters. Left, a modern sugar factory in Barbados.

Photo © Alan Hutchison Library, London

The logo of CANA, the independent news agency launched by the English-speaking Caribbean countries in 1975, with Unesco support.

Unesco and the Caribbean

Ranging from the introduction of educational innovations in the Dominican Republic and co-operation with the Caribbean News Agency (CANA) to support for scientific institutes for biological research and the study and monitoring of marine oil pollution in the region, Unesco's activities touch on almost all aspects of life in the Caribbean.

In the field of education, Unesco, in co-operation with the countries concerned, has launched a major regional project whose main objectives are: the provision of eight to ten years' schooling for all children in the region; the eradication of illiteracy and the development of adult education; the reform and improvement in the general quality and efficiency of educational systems. Adopted at an intergovernmental regional meeting, held in Quito, Ecuador, in April 1981, these objectives emphasize the political will of Member States of the Caribbean region to initiate a process of economic and social development centred on man and his all-round education.

In the natural sciences, within the framework of its Man and the Biosphere Programme, Unesco is involved in a major project of research, training and demonstration aimed at integrated management of humid tropical zones. Pilot projects in Latin America and the Caribbean region are concerned with land-use problems in humid tropical zones such as selective land clearing, reafforestation and shifting cultivation, as well as migration of mountain populations to the tropical lowlands. In marine science the emphasis is on strengthening scientific infrastructures in accordance with Member States' requirements.

In the social sciences, studies are being carried out on endogenous socio-cultural factors in order to identify original forms of development which would respond to regional requirements while respecting each country's cultural identity. Unesco is also collaborating closely with a number of organizations concerned with the development of the social sciences in the region, particularly in the fields of research and training.

Unesco is also undertaking a major research project on cultural contacts in the Caribbean and their evolution. Translations from and into Creole are being encouraged and plans are in hand for production of a General History of the Caribbean. In addition, the International Simón Bolívar Prize, which honours persons or institutions that have made a meritorious contribution to the freedom, independence and dignity of peoples and to the strengthening of solidarity among nations, is to be awarded for the first time on 24 July 1983, the bicentenary of the birth of the "Liberator".

But that unit does not imply uniformity or monotony, nor does it absolve us from singling out the characteristic specific to each area.

Our area, which is sometimes called Afro-America, is that situated around the Caribbean forming the society based on the plantation system, whose rich human inputs of African origin have had a decisive impact on our culture and on our lives and were later supplemented by a variety of Asian contributions.

The history of the immediate past of the modern Caribbean is therefore the history of the sea which, at the dawn of capitalism, witnessed the arrival of the European conquerors and saw them engage in quarrelling and pillage. It was this sea that saw the emergence, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, of our first victorious revolution, the formidable Haitian Revolution which (before Spain and Russia) succeeded in defeating Napoleon's troops, abolished slavery and paved the way for the independence of Latin America. At the end of the century, that same sea was to witness the first tangible movement, organized by Martí, to stem modern imperialism, then in its infancy, and, in this century, the triumph of the Cuban revolution.

Our cultural identity must perforce refer back to that turbulent historical environment. It does this with a growing awareness of how much we have in common, in spite of having been (and in some cases still being) subordinated to different metropolitan powers and consequently speaking different languages. We have experienced colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, under-development and racism; feudal estates, plantations and one-crop economies; slavery, Atlantic crossings and the slave trade; landowners, overseers, slaves and maroons; sugar cane, coffee and bananas; the sugar mill, the plantation house and the humble cabin.

Although the fruits of syncretism are not always the same, they are at times very similar to each other, as in the case of Haitian *voodoo,* Jamaican *pocomania* and Cuban *santería*. And nothing, perhaps, demonstrates more clearly our shared identity than our world-renowned music. That "riotous innovation out of the Indies", as Alejo Carpentier has fittingly put it, could be heard from the very first years of the Conquest and continues to live on today in guarachas, rumbas, congas, sones, boleros, mambos, cha-cha-chas, calypsos, reggae, merengues, tamboritos, sambas, bossa novas and salsas. Nor should we forget that the slave culture of the plantations which developed over the centuries also embraced the south of what is today the United States, where the meeting of Africa and Europe gave birth to negro spirituals, the blues and the powerful jazz that are the first cousins of our own music.

We have, however, yet to assume our full identity and we shall not do so until the last traces of colonialism and neo-colonialism have disappeared from the region. Only then shall we be in a position to assert, through the multiple roots that have contributed to making us a world people, our role as an essential meeting-place in the history of mankind, a history in the making of which we shall no longer be passive onlookers but active protagonists. That process is already under way.

Roberto Fernández Retamar

José Martí
'Citizen of the Americas'

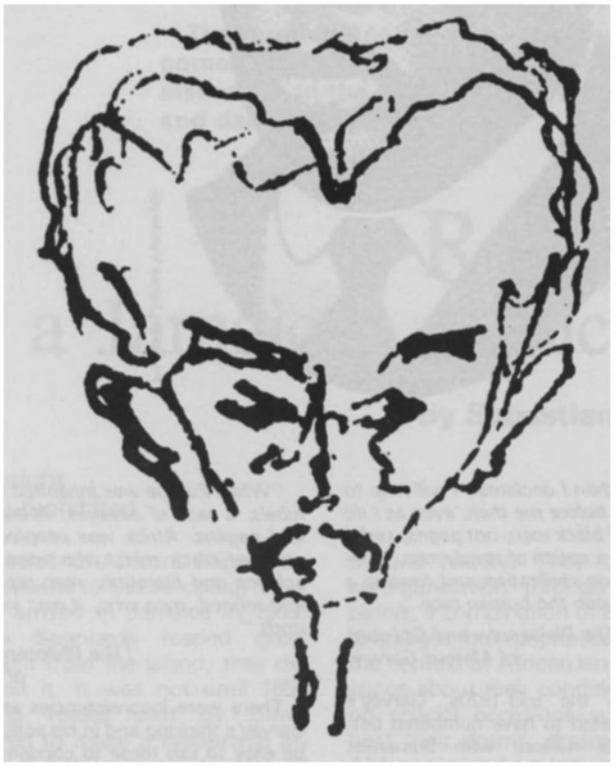

Photo © Snark International, Paris

Self-portrait of José Martí (1853-1895).

ONE of the noblest, purest and most profound figures of Latin American history, José Julian Martí holds a place of honour in the heroic avant-garde alongside Bolívar and San Martín, Hidalgo and Morelos, Sucre and Toussaint Louverture, fathers of the independence of their peoples and illustrious and tireless combatants in the struggle against colonial domination.

Martí was born in Havana on 28 January 1853. The son of an honest junior official of the Spanish government in Cuba, his life as a child was burdened by necessity and a round of wearying tasks. The daily spectacle of arbitrary actions and corruption turned him into a non-conformist and a rebel before he had reached adolescence, and on the publication of his dramatic work *Abdala,* which is filled with patriotic fervour and desire for liberty, the Spanish authorities of the island brought him to trial for "disloyalty", and condemned him to hard labour at the early age of sixteen. In view of the poor state of his health, his prison sentence was commuted to confinement on the island of Pinos, and, in 1871, to exile in Spain.

From this time on, his life became an anguished, impulsive pilgrimage in Europe and America, and although this wandering existence meant enduring the sufferings of the expatriate, it enabled him to develop solid, comprehensive political criteria and a broad culture. In Spain, Martí was able to acquire, at first hand, an insight into the corrupt regime governing Cuba, but he nevertheless came to appreciate (and this is a tribute to his breadth of spirit) the very real virtues of the people of the peninsula, and he seized this opportunity to re-examine his language at its source. From Spain, he went to Mexico where he plunged into a life of intense activity as a lecturer and journalist. His contact with the Mexico of this period led to a lasting commitment to the problems of Latin America—problems to which he subsequently devoted the major part of his political and cultural activity.

Martí returned to Cuba in time for the signing of the Peace of Zanjon, in 1879, after the first war of independence, and, while there, expressed in articles and brilliant speeches his conviction that the freedom of Cuba could only be obtained through armed action. Condemned once more to exile, he left for Spain, moved on to Paris, and then, in 1880, he arrived in New York where he was to spend the next fourteen years of his life.

Upon his arrival in the United States, Martí resolved to devote himself body and soul to the liberation of Cuba. In the process he was obliged to smooth over the differences and disputes between the surviving leaders, determine the ways in which the groups of Cuban emigrants could best contribute, outline the character, and the short- and long-term consequences of the armed struggle which was being prepared, and convince everyone concerned that a war of liberation was both opportune and worthwhile. As a result he gained the total trust of his compatriots and became the unquestioned leader of the fight for the emancipation of his country.

In 1891 Martí founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party, the fundamental instrument of the armed movement then being prepared. From this moment up to the outbreak of the revolution in 1895 his life was one of continuous, frenetic activity, an incessant round of travel across North America, and also into Latin America. In agreement with the Cuban separatist leaders, the Dominican-born Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo, Martí decided to begin operations. On the very eve of the combat he wrote and signed with Gómez the Manifesto of Montecristi—a fundamental document which laid down the nature and the objectives of the revolution.

On 11 April 1895 Martí disembarked in Cuba and joined the insurgent troops as a simple soldier. On 19 May a Spanish bullet put an end to his life in Dos Ríos, in eastern Cuba.

When he set out for Cuba, knowing that he was going to give his life for liberty, the revolutionary leader left in New York a vast and varied corpus of work which, once collated, filled twenty-seven large volumes. These demonstrate clearly that the austere duty of the revolutionary in no way interfered with his vocation as a writer.

Although his books of poems (*Ismaelillo, Versos Libres, Versos Sencillos* and *Flores de Exilio*), in which he expresses his preoccupations and premonitions as a man and as a revulutionary, are distinguished for their contribution to modernism, it was undoubtedly in journalism that he excelled. His famous chronicles, published in many countries of the continent, provided a universally accepted source of information for the peoples of Latin America.

The author of incomparable biographies (Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Longfellow), diaries, and a correspondence of outstanding merit, a literary and art critic noted for his shrewd perceptiveness, he never allowed his passion for Latin America to desert him for a single instant. His preoccupation with the present and the future of the Hispanic peoples of the hemisphere absorbed him completely, and it is totally appropriate that the "Apostle" of the Cubans should also have been dubbed the "Citizen of the Americas".

His action was concentrated, to begin with, in his own country and in the West Indies, of which he wrote in 1894: "The Antilles are at the focal point of the Americas; enslaved, they will become no more than a floating base in the war of an imperial republic against a jealous and superior world which is already preparing to negate its power... if free, they will be a guarantee of the equilibrium and of the independence, still under threat, of Latin America, and of the honour of the Great Republic of the North, which in the development of its territory... will find much surer greatness than in the ignoble conquest of its smaller neighbours."

But as the poet and essayist Roberto Fernández Retamar has written: "What interested Martí in an immediate sense was Cuba... and in a larger framework the American continent south of the River Bravo—'our *mestizo* America'. While there is a constant allusion to this idea throughout his work, it appears with greatest clarity in his fundamental text *Nuestra America,* a document which constitutes a veritable *Magna Carta.* In it he affirms the full originality of these lands. And this affirmation is of capital importance because it is the foundation stone of Martí's vision of the world. This affirmation, this confidence and this challenge constitute the point of departure for everything else in his thought. ■

This sketch of José Martí is largely based on a longer, more detailed study by the Cuban essayist Juan Marinello.

Marcus Garvey and the African dream

by Kenneth Ramchand

Photo © James Vanderzee

IN the first half of the twentieth century there sprang up in the Caribbean and in North America a number of movements in which people of African origin turned for support to that heritage and root. Their labour had sustained economies, and the right to belong had been dearly bought, but New World Negroes were not at ease in the Western societies to which their ancestors had been shipped. Emancipation, they were told, had come; but for the mass of Negroes it seemed long gone. The conditions under which they lived as supposedly free men were at least as demoralizing, especially after the First World War, as those their chained ancestors had endured.

At no time in the history of the world, for the last five hundred years, was there ever a serious attempt made to free Negroes. We have been camouflaged into believing that we were made free by Abraham Lincoln, that we were made free by Victoria of England, but up to now we are still slaves, we are industrial slaves, we are social slaves, we are political slaves, and the New Negro desires a freedom that has no boundary, no limit."

(The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey)

Of the movements that arose to bring emotional sustainment and practical support to the victims of this depressing scene, the most spectacular was that surrounding the Jamaican Marcus Mosiah Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Born a colonial on August 17, 1877 Garvey died an obscure exile in the British metropolis in 1940. Between these two dates, Garvey rose to fantastic eminence among Negroes in America. He was the Black Moses, the spiritual leader sent to lead his people out of bondage; he was also the maker of the political kingdom, His Excellency the Provisional President of Africa.

"I asked: 'Where is the black man's Government? Where is his King and his kingdom? Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?' I could not find them, and then I declared: 'I will help to make them...' I saw before me then, even as I do now, a new world of black men, not peons, serfs, dogs and slaves, but a nation of sturdy men, making their impress upon civilization and causing a new light to dawn upon the human race."

(The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey)

At its height in the mid-1920s, Garvey's Association is estimated to have numbered between four and six million, with branches, members, or supporters in all the countries where there were people of African origin.

Garvey envisaged a day in the future when all Negroes would have returned to a united and independent Africa. In the meantime, however, New World Negroes could contribute to the creation of a free Africa to which they could look for protection as they journeyed in the world, and to which they could return if necessary; "a nation of our own, strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race scattered all over the world, and to compel the respect of the nations and races of the earth". In their adopted countries, at the same time, they could organize themselves "for the absolute purpose of bettering our condition, industrially, commercially, socially, religiously and politically."

However, as a result of mismanagement, incompetence, greed and corruption among his lieutenants, most of Garvey's economic projects foundered like the broken-down ships he was sold by white owners at black market prices for his Black Star Shipping Line which he intended to be the foundation of Negro trade and the symbol of repatriation.

His educational aims were more nearly successful, but not as he originally intended. After founding the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Jamaica in 1914, Garvey proposed the establishment of colleges for Jamaican Negroes on the model of Booker T. Washington's Tuskagee Institute. It was in order to consult with Washington himself on this project that Garvey planned the 1916 visit to America which led to the shifting of the base of his operations to the United States. His enduring educational enterprise, however, was the founding of the weekly *The Negro World*, which ran from 1918 to 1933. In its pages, Garveyism was expounded in detail, and readers were educated in the glories of African history and the heroism of Negro revolts, and the comparative savagery of European peoples.

"When Europe was inhabited by a race of cannibals, a race of savages, hated men, heathens and pagans, Africa was peopled with a race of cultured black men, who were masters in art, science and literature; men who were cultured and refined; men who, it was said, were like the gods."

(The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey)

There were inconsistencies and confusions in Garvey's thinking and in his actions, and it would be easy to use these to condemn him as an extremist and a crackpot, as many Negro intellectuals did at the time. His island antagonism towards the brown and light-skinned class of Jamaica was transferred to the Negro intelligentsia, whom he invariably saw as lackeys of White America.

He co-operated for a time with the Ku Klux Klan because he shared with them the wish for racial purity and the emigration of the Negro from the United States. Always rash and undiplomatic, Garvey skirmished with authority many times until at last they did for him, convicting him on a flimsy and put-up charge of using the U.S. mail to defraud investors in the Black Star Shipping Line. Garvey was deported from the U.S. in 1928 and returned to Jamaica where his brown and light-skinned antagonists were waiting. Humiliated at home, the failing prophet went into exile in England where he died a beaten and disillusioned man.

In 1964 Garvey's body was disinterred from its London tomb and returned to Jamaican soil. Several years later he was officially proclaimed a National Hero. Even before this, both his contemporaries and those who never experienced his movement had begun to separate the follies and foibles of this vain, egotistical and insecure man from his enduring achievements.

Those elements in his philosophy or opinions that were sound were not new, many of them having been put forward by Negro intellectuals or men of letters of some of whom Garvey had probably never heard. Yet this skilful orator, showman and propagandist *extraordinaire* communicated with ordinary Negroes and touched their hurts as no one had done before. Nobody before Garvey had been able to organize a mass movement of such size and enthusiasm from the vast Negro proletariat. Nobody had so stirred their imagination. "I shall teach the black man to see beauty in himself." Nobody had given them such self-esteem. ■

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Reggae music exploded into existence among the urban poor of Jamaica in the early 1960s and rapidly won an international following, especially among young people. The drums and guitars of Reggae masters beat out pulsating sounds which are a synthesis of African and Afro-American rhythms, accompanying lyrics whlch draw not only on contemporary events and the timeless themes of passion, but also on harrowing folk memories :

When I remember the crack of the whip
My blood runs cold
I remember the slave ship
When they brutalized my very soul.

The roots of Reggae—no one knows for certain where the word comes from—run deep into the past of Jamaica where, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, slaves kept alive the rhythms, songs and dances of Africa.

Reggae: a Jamaican musical phenomenon

by Sebastian Clarke

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THE first batch of Africans shipped by the Europeans to the so-called "New World" arrived in Jamaica in 1509. Although the Spaniards reaped great economic benefit from the island, they did not fully exploit it. It was not until 1655 when invading forces sent by Oliver Cromwell arrived to make a systematic attempt to wrest "all the vast territories held by Spain in the Caribbean", that the economic transformation of the island was completely undertaken. The British found the island underpopulated and underdeveloped. Jamaica was thus easily conquered by the British from the Spanish with the aid of Africans.

Although the Africans were indeed enslaved, their will for resistance and rebellion was not broken. Thus rebellions characterized the history of Jamaica. Slaves who escaped ran to the hills and established the type of social, cultural, political and religious systems that they were accustomed to in Africa. These runaway slaves were known as Maroons.

They fought against the British and created havoc and fear in the minds and on the properties of the slave-masters. Thus the British, failing to make meaningful inroads in destroying the Maroons, despite the presence of great numbers of British military officers, finally pacified them, signing peace treaties with them and granting them the right to stay on their lands.

By the end of the eighteenth century the Maroons were finally broken as a dissident and united opposition force. The Africans, however, in spite of the abject condition of slavery, still retained large elements of their cultural history. They evolved means of communication through the invention of *patois*, a combination of English and African languages but phonetically spoken within the context of African languages. They sang songs about their conditions, played games on special occasions such as Christmas, beat their drums, dressed up in elaborate African-derived costumes, and danced.

Many of their forms of religious worship remained unchanged. This was due to the fact that the orthodox religious denominations had no real interest in converting Africans. The priests conducted baptisms *en masse*, and for money. However, the setting up of the Ethiopian Baptist Church under George Liele, an Afro-American preacher and a former slave, created a great deal of interest for Africans because the manner of worship was similar to their own and the offer of redemption and salvation was a way out of slavery after death.

In the 1860s there was a great religious revival in Jamaica, and it was centered in the parish of St. Thomas where George William Gordon, a coloured Baptist preacher and a member of the local council, along with Paul and Moses Bogle, played a great role. Not only did they help to rekindle the flame of religion, but they also stood for justice for the poor. This led directly to what is now known as the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865.

To suppress this protest against the treatment of the poor, the might of the British militia was invoked, and both Gordon and Paul Bogle were killed. It is important to recognize the significance of this event in the lives of the people from this area, because it was from this parish that *Rastafari*, both as a religious and political phenomenon, later originated. The Rastafari movement takes its name from Ras Tafari, as the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was known before he was crowned in 1930.

The history of Rastafari is inseparable from that of Marcus Garvey, who was born in the parish of St. Ann's and very early demonstrated an interest in bettering the conditions of the poor (see opposite page). After moving to the United States in 1916 Garvey built a formidable organizational base from which he attempted to tackle the problems of black people, not only in the United States, but world-wide.

When the American government in an attempt to stem his influence engineered jealousy and dissension in his movement and had him jailed and then deported for fraud, Garvey rebuilt his movement in Jamaica and at one of his conventions was supposed to have said to his followers, "Look to Africa where a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near".

People consulted their Bibles for confirmation and found it in relation to passages mentioning Ethiopia and the breaking of the seven seals, and especially to "the Lion of Judah, the Root of David...", etc. When Ras Tafari (Selassie) was crowned in 1930 he revived the titles of old, "The Conquering Lion from the tribe of Judah, King of Kings, Lord of Lords", etc. But even before the coronation of Haile Selassie, the concept of Ethiopianism had contributed greatly to affirming in the minds of black people that although the European attempted desperately to project that Africans were savages before the coming of the European, and that they had made no contribution to world culture and civilization, this was a falsification of history. This affirmation took the form of rejecting the Bible as a weapon devised by the European to keep blacks in mental bondage and of insisting that blacks ought to create new religious systems from that of ancestral Africa. Not surprisingly, a great deal of literature was written, and people sought it out. This expanded the debate on African culture and gave indications that black people were prepared to govern their own lives.

The coronation of Selassie set the seal on the acceptance of a new religious faith. Early pioneers of this faith were Leonard

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

SEBASTIAN CLARKE, *Trinidad-born writer and journalist, has written widely on the modern Caribbean arts. He is the editor of* New Planet, *an anthology of modern Caribbean writing (1979) and the author of* Jah Music, *published by Heinemann in 1980. He is currently working on a biography of Bob Marley.*

Photo Jacques Pavlovsky © Sygma, Paris

Reggae is a Jamaican musical phenomenon whose emergence parallels that of other popular musical forms such as Soul and Rock and Roll. Reggae music was the creation of the special genius of the urban poor, the "sufferers" of Jamaica's capital, Kingston. Drawing on the spiritual resources of the sufferers, it has a stridency and an incantative magic that has captured the minds and bodies of people all over the world, for Reggae has become a truly international phenomenon. Above, Reggae's most renowned exponent, the late Bob Marley, accompanied by the I-Threes group, during a concert given at Le Bourget, France, in July 1980, which attracted an audience of many thousands of Reggae fans.

Photo Owen Franken © Sygma, Paris

'The music is an important force within the lives of the black community, whether living in Jamaica (above) the Americas or Europe...'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

P. Howell, Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert and H. Archibald Dunkley. In varying degrees they felt the wrath of official society. They were harassed, hounded down, locked up, physically attacked, and their locks, the long plait-like strands they sometimes wore, shaved off their heads. In the early days of Rastafari, the philosophical input was not confined solely to Jamaica. Black churchmen from Afro-America, South Africa, Antigua and Jamaica itself, took the concept of Ethiopianism and Garvey's philosophy, and wrote important documents that contributed meaningfully to the articulation of Rastafari.

In its philosophy Rastafari was in the main anti-colonialism and an affirmation of African cultural and social history. It offered both religious and political alternatives and it was based on the focal point of Africa, Haile Selassie as a man of divinity because of his ancestral connexion with the King Solomon-Queen of Sheba union and the long unbroken line of kings since then. Whether or not Selassie was a despot is insignificant to the movement that his acceptance has created in the psyches of the people. It is revolutionary because it overturns the notion of white kings and queens and the central focus on Europe.

In this quest for cultural authenticity, it would have been contradictory for Rastafarians to be singing European-created songs in the context of European music. They thus fashioned their own songs, adapting the psalms from the Bible, as well as creating new religious songs out of their own religious experience. The Burru people, descendants of the Ashanti of Ghana, were one such people in Jamaica who survived with their drumming intact. Rastafarians gave the Burru their new religion and accepted the Burrus' African drumming in exchange. All this occurred in the slums of West Kingston which were a refuge for the poor and outcast.

In the 1940s Afro-American music was popular with Jamaicans. This phenomenon continued in the 1950s with Rhythm and Blues (R & B) and Boogie Woogie (an outgrowth of musical styles born out of similar deprivation to that known by Jamaicans, and sharing a similar ancestral base—Africa). The music was played on sound systems (modern-day discos) as well as on the radio. People also had short-wave radio that could pick up radio stations in the American South (Jamaica is about 160 kilometres from Miami).

Young singers like Owen Grey, Winston Jackie Edwards, Laurel Aitken and Alton Ellis used to imitate the styles of the Afro-American music. The dominant element in Boogie Woogie was the rhythmic impression of the piano. It played a specific rhythmic style that Jamaican musicians liked. And when, in the early 1960s, Afro-American R & B was being superseded by Rock and Roll, Jamaicans could not feel any great emotional attachment.

Thus they retained the element of the piano rhythm and began to devise new ideas to blend with it. Firstly they continued in the R & B idiom, then they moved gradually towards creating their own music. This occurred around 1962, significantly, the year in which Jamaica achieved its independence.

The musicians, because they came from the urban poor from whom the philosophy of Rastafari issued, were obviously politically and culturally aware. Thus compositions were sometimes titled after events that were occurring both in Jamaican society and in the world. "Independence Ska", for example, was composed by the Skatalites, the foremost Jamaican musical backing band.

As early as 1958, Rastafarian music, i.e. drumming, was placed on a popular record by the Folkes Brothers, "Oh Carolina" (an old Afro-American tune). The record was produced by the legendary Jamaican artist Prince Buster who imitated the sound of a saxophone with his mouth because he could not have afforded the use of a real saxophone, and the drumming was immortalized by the late Count Ossie, the man most responsible for the popularity of this sound.

After Jamaica received its independence, opportunities for local Jamaicans to control power and reap financial rewards were greater than before. Political rivalry was already part and parcel of the Jamaican political scene. In the 1960s and 1970s, this escalated, drawing in the urban poor whose singer/sufferers expressed the nature of their social environment in songs.

Popular Jamaican music has a genetic connexion with other Caribbean music. In the 1950s the most popular indigenous music was *Mento,* which was a combination of calypso and musical rhythm from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. In the late 1970s and the 1980s, Jamaican music has shown proclivities for calypso. The latter provides the rhythmic ingredient which is expressed by the local Jamaican musicians as a fusion with Reggae. But what is important is that the themes of calypso have directly influenced the lyrics of the Jamaican singer. The themes of Trinidadian calypsos have in fact been reworked and transposed into the Jamaican cultural context, in now-popular Reggae songs.

Today therefore, as in the beginning, Reggae music is not limited to one musical concept or to one thematic preoccupation. There are songs that speak of love, death, destruction, war and other topical subjects. The music is, though, inextricably linked with the struggle for political liberation for black people globally. And when the music speaks of liberation it is not speaking simply of colour limitations.

The music has been accepted by black people living all over the world as their own music. Thus black people in Europe, for example, are making significant contributions to its development. They are adding new instrumental ideas to give the music colour and are welding their experience of other music, particularly Afro-American Soul and Jazz, to give a new dimension to Reggae. The music is obviously an important force within the lives of the black community, whether living in Jamaica, the Americas or Europe. In the latter situation it has given strength and resolve to those experiencing the harshness of European racism and prejudice and has forced them to resist these experiences.

Stylistically, Jamaican music is changing every day. New styles of drum and bass combinations (the foundation of the music) are coming into play, and different ways of communicating a song have become a characteristic of the Jamaican or black singer. Undoubtedly the late Bob Marley contributed largely to the world acceptance of Reggae, without compromising his political vision, but the music itself transcends Bob Marley and expresses the deep spiritual resources, wishes and aspirations of the black world for eventual freedom and justice. As long as suffering is the norm of the black experience, Reggae will be relevant to the human condition.

■ **Sebastian Clarke**

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PHOTOCOMPOSITION-PHOTOGRAVURE CHRISTIAN PAGNOUD - 6/8, rue des Epinettes - 75017 PARIS.

UNESCO COURIER INDEX 1981

January

THE HANDICAPPED TENTH OF HUMANITY (F. Mayor). International Year of Disabled Persons (A.-M. M'Bow). U.N. Declaration of Rights of the Disabled. The courage to take risks (E.V. Roberts). Seeing with my hands (O.I. Skorokhodova). The handicap of prejudice (P.O. Mba). 'I am so afraid they will laugh at me' (B. Lundahl). Unesco Braille Courier (F.H. Potter). 4 pages in Braille. Louis Braille (S. Guillemet). Unesco and the disabled (N.-I. Sundberg). Disability and the developing world (N. Acton). A future for every blind child (P. Posmowski). Art treasures: Stricken doe (Bulgaria).

February

TOURISM AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS (A. Bouhdiba). Passport to development? (E. de Kadt). The Water Decade (1981-1990). Emperor Qin's bronze chariots (Photos). Brazil's Museum of the Unconscious (F. de Camargo e Almeida). High-speed language learning (M. Vaisburd). Resurgence of sail (A. Gillette). Art treasures: Carved crucifixion (Iceland).

March

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ART (M. Hours). Lascaux: Saving a sanctuary of prehistoric art. Zapotec statue. X-ray microfluorescence and a Merovingian treasure. Ancient metallurgy. Anatomy of a harp. Nuclear dating techniques (B. Keisch). Gallery of fakes (S.J. Fleming). Principles of conservation (B.M. Feilden). Holography (I.G. Yavtushenko and V.B. Markov). Art treasures: Baal the storm god (Lebanon).

April

MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE (A.-M. M'Bow). The genesis of ecology (F. di Castri). Tropical forests (F. Golley and M. Hadley). Taming of a swamp. Nature's chemical factory. The changing forest. Marginal lands (M. Ayyad and G. Glaser). Holding the desert at bay. Mountain scenarios. Cities in crisis (V. Giacomini). The ecology of megalopolis (S. Boyden and J. Celecia). Conservation for development (W. Lusigi and J. Robertson). Biosphere reserves in the USSR (V. Sokolov and P. Gounin). Poachers turned gamekeepers. Getting the message across (J. Damlamian). Perspectives and prospects (R. Slatyer). Art treasures: The bird-man (Chile).

May

BULGARIA: A modern nation salutes its past (M. Stancheva): 1. 'It grows but does not grow old'; 2. 5,000 years of town-planning; 3. A tale of three cities; 4. From St. Cyril to the National Revival. The plight of Africa's 5 million refugees (M.-L. Zollner). Science, pseudo-science and racism (A. Jacquard). The man who vanquished yellow fever (P.M. Pruna and R.O. Pedraza). St. Benedict of Nursia (G. Penco). Art treasures: Shamanistic idol (Dominican Republic).

June

NEW WAYS TO LEARNING. SOS parents (L.F. Buscaglia). An African approach (G.-J. Nlo). Their handicap is hunger. Childhood awakening (M. Thorburn). Unesco and special education. Special schools or integrated education? 1. 'The integration of the handicapped can best be prepared in special schools' (V.I. Lubovski); 2. 'Our task is to bring the retarded into the community' (M. Söder). The rights of mentally retarded persons. Communities that care (M. Boucebci). Sounds from silence (Li Hongtai and Shen Jiayin). Self-reliance and the right to work (E. Sackstein). Disabled characters in search of an author (T. Orjasaeter). Art treasures: Pre-Aksumite portrait (Ethiopia).

July

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